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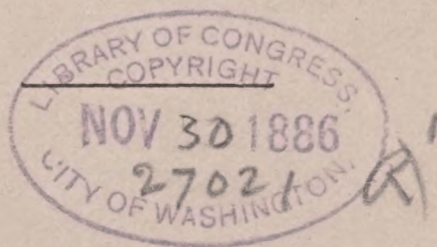
BANKER OF BANKERSVILLE

A NOVEL

BY

MAURICE THOMPSON

AUTHOR OF "AT LOVE'S EXTREMES," "HIS SECOND CAMPAIGN,"
"A TALLAHASSEE GIRL," "BY-WAYS AND BIRD-NOTES,"
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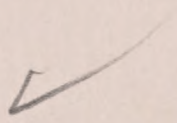


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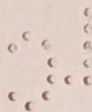
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THIS STORY OF A WESTERN LAWYER AND HIS FINANCIAL PARTNER IS
DEDICATED TO THE GREATEST LIVING FORENSIC ORATOR, THE

HONORABLE D. W. VOORHEES,

BY HIS HUMBLEST FRIEND AND ADMIRER

THE AUTHOR.

A BANKER OF BANKERSVILLE.

I.

MRS. NORA O'SLAUGHTERY, a bright and comely widow, was hovering around the immaculate table of her little breakfast-room, where her four or five regular boarders were discussing their morning meal. She held in one of her fair, plump hands a long brush of gay peacock feathers, with which she made pretence of driving off flies, when in fact the closely-screened windows and doors rendered it impossible for even a gnat to trespass on the quiet neatness of her well-spread board.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery's boarders were all men ; she objected to women as troublesome.

"They meddle and bother and make a whole world o' worry when there's no need at all," she would say, with a charming hint of the brogue of County Kerry, "and then they always want to borry your waterproof cloak, or your overshoes, or your umbrella, or for that matter, your hard-earned money, and they niver pay back—niver."

Mrs. O'Slaughtery was ashamed of the Irish sounds that would now and then betray her; she struggled hard to repress every salient of her nationality. Not that she was ashamed of her birthplace or of her ancestry, but because she very much desired to be like the intelligent and well-educated American women with whom she affected a refreshing familiarity. She was handsome, and she knew well the charm of being handsome; her wit was of the true County Kerry sort, and there never was a readier talker. She was nearly always smiling, but she could cry like April, being quite ready with tears as with the music of her sweet laughter. The boarders liked her, as did every body who knew her, though some of them could not resist the temptation to tease her whenever the occasion offered. One, Jere Downs, was the most incorrigible of these, owing in a degree, no doubt, to the fact that he was a bachelor and bald-headed, with a great, round jolly face which forestalled undue vexation, and with a voice as full of blarney as if he too had been born in County Kerry.

One boarder, Mrs. Nora O'Slaughtery had who was to her, as well as to many another inquisitive person in Bankersville, a most interesting and baffling mystery. This was Louis Milford, the tall, quiet, dark, young man who sat at the foot of the table. He had dropped into the boarding-house some four months prior to the time at which our story opens, giving no

account of himself, but enforcing the fact that he was a gentleman by that subtle means known to every close observer, but at the command of so few. His charm of manner, if it could be called that, was not due in the least to sociability or even friendliness, for he was reserved and distant to an extent never before tolerated in Bankersville.

It was generally understood that Louis Milford was a southerner; not that any body had ever heard him say so; it was patent, obvious; but from just what southern state he had come and in what part of the Confederate Army he had served, it was not so plain. At first he was supposed to be rich, owing, no doubt, to his elegant, though by no means costly clothes, and to the well-equipped law office he had opened on the second floor of a building just across the street from the new Court-house. Later it was discovered that he was very poor and hard pressed to keep his rent paid and his clothes respectable, a discovery which lowered him very much in the common opinion of Bankersville, notwithstanding that his deportment did not change in the least, and though he paid all his bills with mechanical regularity. We shall never find out how the people of a small inland town make themselves acquainted with an individual's financial condition, but we well know that it requires more than cash payments and absolute reticence to hide a constantly collapsing purse. The quintessence of poverty leaks

out, bottle it as we may, and gives its unmistakable peculiarity to the atmosphere around us.

Mrs. Nora O'Slaughtery, as she walked lightly behind her guests and waved the peacock banner slowly back and forth above their heads, was pondering rather more seriously than ever before the probable financial distress of her favorite boarder, not from a selfish point of view strictly, though she could ill-afford to lose by him, but with some concern for the young man himself, whose face appeared, as she fancied, more thoughtful this morning than usual. She looked at him now and again with something like a tender light in her large blue eyes.

Milford appeared to eat mechanically, as if his whole mind had gone on some distant errand. Once or twice he lifted his glance to the face of Mrs. O'Slaughtery, as if she might be rather intimately connected with his thoughts, but he certainly did not notice the quick blush that each time ran over the widow's healthy cheeks.

"My dear Mrs. O'Slaughtery," said Jere Downs, toying with a snowy napkin, "this chicken is the tenderest for one of its age, now mind you, that ever I tasted—delicious!"

"Indade—indeed," (she corrected herself), "you're old enough to be a judge, Mr. Downs, to be sure, but it would be a spring chayken indeed that'd feel flattered in the layst by your compliment, I'm sure."

Downs leaned back and chuckled behind the napkin with his eyes twinkling and his red face glowing.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery tossed her shapely head after the manner of one who has had the best of an affair, and resumed work with the brush of peacock feathers.

"It's a question of some importance and of much obscurity, Mrs. O'Slaughtery, as to how old a chicken must be before it may certainly be said to have passed the boundary of youth and entered——"

"Never moind, Mr. Downs, your appetite is better developed than your intelligence, to be sure, but when you get older you'll be all right; you're a very clear-headed youth, even now."

Downs involuntarily stroked the bald top of his head at this sly allusion to it, and after rallying a moment responded:

"Very true, very true; the upward flight of my airy wit is never in danger of getting frustrated by a Langtry bang or a pompadour roach; you guessed it the first trial, Mrs. O'Slaughtery."

"I'm sure I don't comprehend your meaning, at all, Mr. Downs, you're so very indirect and obscure in your allusions, altogether." She put on a demure air and held up her unoccupied hand as she spoke, arching her eyebrows at the same time, and drawing in a long breath, "If I were you, Mr. Downs, I should study simplicity of expression; you'd be more popular in your business."

Downs was an auctioneer, and it was evident that he had unlimited confidence in himself, but somehow Mrs. O'Slaughtery nearly always made him feel his inferiority in these light passages; it was not so much what she said as the spirit she put into it. She knew the art of dressing effectively on a small allowance, and the bloom of her face and the plump, youthful grace of her rather large figure gave her wit and humor a force, not in the words she used, but which came along with them like an electrical accompaniment. Her voice, a genuinely Irish one, was very rich and sweet, and her lips and teeth were beautiful.

"Well, good-morning, *au revoir*, Mrs. O'Slaughtery. I must tear myself away until the noon-day feast; meantime, don't forget that lovely new style of baked beans you've been givin' us every day for the last six weeks," said Downs, rising from the table and hastily leaving the room.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery was about to retort, when she chanced to glance at the young lawyer, who was also preparing to go. Something in his face arrested her words, and almost her breath as well. Paleness, as we call it, shows with strange effect, sometimes, on a very dark face, especially if the eyes too be dark and deep-set. During a moment or two, while the rest of the boarders were going out, Mr. Milford stood in the attitude of one who considers a question at once urgent and perplexing. There was not a hint of

unsteadiness in his face or form ; but something in his air suggested an inward faltering, as if he were about to do something which called for unusual effort. Presently, when he and Mrs. O'Slaughtery were left to themselves, he said :

"Can I have a moment's talk with you in the parlor, Mrs. O'Slaughtery?"

The widow's fresh face grew pale, and for once in her life she found her tongue unable to serve her need. A sudden weakness came over her, causing an almost visible tremor to assail her limbs.

"I have something that I must talk with you about at once," he added, turning as he spoke and passing through a doorway into the parlor.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery followed him, with a sense of suffocation she never before had felt. Involuntarily she put her hands over her heart.

He gave her a chair, and drawing another quite near her, sat down. It was a pretty and cozy little room, dim and cool.

"I have thought of speaking to you, but have delayed, perhaps too long, hoping against hope."

His voice was firm, but it was almost husky. He paused a moment, sitting upright with his small, almost delicate hands resting on his knees.

The widow tried to look at him but her eyes fell under his painfully direct gaze. She felt that she must say something.

"Oh, Mr. Milford, you're not going away, I hope? It's very pleasant, indade, to have you with us; we sha'n't be able to do without you at all," she tremulously ejaculated.

"It depends upon you, Mrs. O'Slaughtery," he responded; "I ought to go, and I shall if you desire it. I feel that I have not treated you kindly, to say the least, in not speaking sooner." He was evidently trying to measure his words and preserve his distant dignity of manner.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery breathed as one does who has just finished a long run up-stairs, but he did not observe it. He was fully employed with keeping the mastery of his own feelings.

"I can not say that I have entirely lost hope," he went on, lifting his eyes to the ceiling and speaking in a slow way, "but I do not feel that it is right to ask you to share in my small remnant of confidence. I don't wish to mislead you."

"No, sir; I know you wouldn't desave me at all. You're too noble and good; your southern heart is entirely too brave and warum for the loikes o' that!" she exclaimed, forgetting to guard against the Irish accent and brogue.

Milford moved uneasily when the word southern fell from her lips, as if some peculiar sting belonged to it. He recovered himself instantly, however, and again fixing his eyes upon her face, said:

"You must not let your confidence in my honor overrule your good, practical, business judgment in this matter, for my future is very precarious, it promises nothing whatever that I can see, nothing whatever." There was a singular bitterness in his tone.

She had gathered up the corner of her little embroidered white apron and, as furtively as possible, she wiped away a tear with it.

He saw this, and for the first time faltered in his slow speech. He felt his own eyes grow dim for a second, but he brought forward his stubborn will and crushed back the emotion. Then, with sudden effort:

"The time for which I have paid you is up this morning," he went on, his voice actually husky, "and I have no more money. You must trust me, or I must go; and to trust me," he hurriedly exclaimed, "is to depend on a broken stick!"

Mrs. O'Slaughtery drew a sudden, deep breath, as if his words had been a cold stream of water dashed over her, and sat bolt upright in her chair, looking straight at him now. She broke forth:

"An' this is your great saycret is it? Bless me loife!" Then gathering herself together in a twinkling, she abandoned the hated brogue.

"Oh, I see," she said, "and it is credit you want!" She laughed and flung down her apron. "Well, I never credited but one man, and he owes me yit,

though it's a long time since it was due. Credit breeds discredit, ye know."

Milford arose. The strange paleness had deepened in his face.

"I do not blame you," he murmured, as he half turned away, "you are right, I never could pay you."

Mrs. O'Slaughtery sprang to her feet and took a quick step toward him, with her arms half-raised, but she checked whatever impulse was moving her, and stood before him erect, with her big, gray-blue eyes wide open. She was almost as tall as he, although his stature was above the average, and she showed her fine figure to good effect. It was but a short space she required for getting full control of herself, then she pointed to his chair and said:

"Sit down, Mr. Milford, and let us talk this matter over. I think there's no trouble about it at all. You are excited."

He sat down, but got up again at once and said:

"No, it is foolish—it is ungenerous in me. I can not, I do not ask it."

"Now listen, at you!" she exclaimed; "sit down just a bit, don't be going off in a flurry. Would you leave a lady when she wants to talk with you!"

He dropped once more into the chair, and a smile, rather a forlorn one, to be sure, came over his haggard face.

"Now, thin, business," she said, putting all her wealth

of cheerfulness into her voice ; “ you’ve asked me for credit, and, rayther than lose a good boarder, I’m going to give it. What do you say to a two months’ trial, Mr. Milford ? ”

Her head, with its load of dark brown hair was held to one side while she was speaking, and she leaned her body slightly forward as she ended. Milford was dazed to a degree that rendered him unable to formulate an answer at once.

“ Eight weeks, sir, no more, I’ll give you,” she continued in a bantering tone, settling back in her chair, “ and if you don’t catch a good client by that time I’ll let you go.”

He smiled again, despite his low spirits ; her cheerfulness was infectious.

“ Will, you may smile,” she archly added, “ but I declare upon my word that I won’t keep you a day longer than eight weeks, if you don’t pay, so, there now ! ”

“ All right, Mrs. O’Slaughtery,” he finally said, with an attempt at a levity not natural to him at any time, “ I’ll accept your kind offer, but the eight weeks’ board will be lost to you, I’m afraid.”

“ Niver moind—niver moind, Mr. Milford, I’ll take my chances, all the same,” she responded, almost gayly. “ Now off with you to your office, and to work with a good will, sir ! ”

The young man arose and stood for a time in silence,

looking down upon her. Then with a tremor in his voice he hurriedly exclaimed :

“I can not even try to say thanks to you—you are doing more for me than you dream of—you are saving more than my life.”

She got up, smiling sweetly, and stood before him.

“Go, now, and don’t iver at all mention this again,” she said ; “it’s high toime for your office to be open, who knows but what there’s a rich cloient waiting on your stair this minute !”

Louis Milford snatched the woman’s hand and squeezed it, pressed it to his lips in an ecstasy of gratitude, then dropped it and stalked loftily out of the house.

Mrs. Nora O’Slaughtery stood, just as Milford left her, gazing at the carpet and breathing aloud as if panting from great exertion. She clasped her hands and wrung them, whispering in a shrill, tragic way as she did so :

“Oh, the poor mon ! The darlin’ dear fellow ! How he has suffered, poor boy ! And—and—and—what a silly goose I was, to be sure ! What a squeeze he gave my hand ! and it was a burning kiss—a real lover’s kiss, it was ! I wonder, but—pshaw !”

She flung herself about, tossed her head airily and ran out into the dining-room where she soon began to sing some gay Irish love song, as she busied herself with her work. Her face for a full hour wore a bril-

liant blush and her eyes sparkled with a very becoming light. Now and again, in the spaces between singing and moods of thoughtfulness, she would laugh softly to herself and murmur in a tone of banter: "Dear, dear, and what a flighty goose I was, to think he was going to say any thing!"

She shrugged her shoulders energetically and put a cluster of violets on her bosom in token of the purity of her friendship for the poor young man.

II.

MILFORD walked down the street toward his office, scarcely aware of any relief from the strain under which he had been suffering. The humiliation of his new predicament seemed worse, from a certain point of view, than the one from which Mrs. O'Slaughtery's kindness had rescued him. A sense of humiliation fell over him. It was as if every body he passed on the street knew that he was a pensioner on a poor woman's bounty and was wondering why he was such a failure in a business way. The four or five months that he had been in Bankersville appeared, as he looked back over them, an age of disappointment, worry and anguish. How anxious he had been to keep people from knowing of his struggle with poverty, and now how could he bear to face the further and bitterer blasts of a storm which, until to-day he had buffeted almost serenely, thinking himself unobserved and therefore unpitied. He was very proud and by nature and the circumstances of training, he had formed the habit of carrying his head high and passing every body with a certain air of reserve and distant, almost solemn courtesy, by no means charming to the cheerful, energetic and equally proud democrats of Bankersville.

The young men who would have become his companions and friends were mostly farmers' sons who had come to the little city to seek their fortunes in the professions, or in merchandising, and who retained something of the breadth and freedom of prairie corn-fields and liberal meadows in their characters. They resented his bearing toward them as not only unfriendly, but as an assumption of personal superiority. No doubt the fact that his education appeared to be of a higher order than theirs and his manners indicative of better breeding, had generated that sort of envy in their breasts which, to most of us, is very humiliating and yet very dear. Democracy is superbly liberal to every body except the aristocrat, and especially the aristocrat who has no money. If Milford had been very rich and had been inclined to make a great show of personal extravagance, the situation would have been quite different. So, if he had owned a title, no matter how empty, his lofty bearing might have caused him no inconvenience; for any thing genuine, even a genuine title of despised nobility, extorts a kind of respect from the most ultra republican, no matter how furious may be his hatred of every hereditary distinction among men.

Milford's reticence, the mystery which in some way had attached to his past history, and his peculiar independence and self-sufficiency of manner, all combined to emphasize a certain feeling, almost amounting to

satisfaction, with which the citizens of Bankersville perceived his certain descent toward humiliation. It would not be just to Milford if we should attribute his course to bad motives or to a weakness for mere show, and yet the cost of his law library and office furniture and his punctilious observance of the latest fashion in his dress were to be classed as evidences of folly by practical men in Bankersville, considering that he was poor, unknown, and just beginning the pursuit of a very exacting and precarious profession. Another fact weighed heavily against him, he was a Southerner and had been a confederate soldier. The war of the rebellion was too recent a thing then for any great softening of the feelings its horrors had excited to, have come about, and to many good people it appeared a bit of brazen impudence for an unrepentant rebel to come up into the North and complacently open an office, with a view to competing with loyal men before a loyal public for the emoluments of professional life. Then, too, some close observers concluded that Milford carried in his face, fine-cut and almost stern, unmistakable evidences of having been a cruel, soulless slave-driver, or, at least, an abettor of those who kept blood-hounds and delighted in the music of the lash. The human imagination is so ready to assist to its utmost the development of every tragic suggestion in such an instance. How much of this condition of public feeling was due to Milford's lack of those qualities

which render a man popular, and to his reserve and hauteur of manner, would be hard to say. Bankersville was situated at about that point of latitude and longitude, nearly midway between St. Louis and Cincinnati, where a long line of rich and cultured ancestry and an air of personal exclusiveness are of least value, and where individual energy, pluck and shrewdness compass the largest results. Milford was well aware of this, and felt that if once he could find his way to an opportunity, he should be able to command the full value of whatever intellectual superiority he possessed, despite the hindrance offered by his antecedents. But his was not a character formed for making its own opportunities, if indeed he was fitted for grasping fortune when it should be thrust toward him. His first step in Bankersville was a mistake characteristic of no Western business man. He had but two thousand dollars to begin with, and of this sum he invested eighteen hundred dollars in a well-selected law library and an elegant suite of office furniture, including a carpet, leaving but two hundred dollars between his lips and starvation, in a town where he was a stranger in all that the word implies. Of course he ought to have foreseen the result; but the truth is he never once thought of it until it was upon him, when the apparition of failure and worse struck him blind and dumb, so to speak. For a certain number of days he had sat in his office diligently studying the statutes and court decisions of the

state, earnestly intent upon making himself thoroughly ready for the clients he never doubted would come to him. Suddenly he found his purse nearly empty and not a brief in hand, not a client with which to begin his list. Fortunately such a predicament comes to comparatively few persons of Milford's character, for, after all, most of our poor young men who go into the professions find their way to an honest living without any particularly tragical experiences. No doubt the reason of this lies in the fact that as a class and as individuals they recognize the necessity of crawling before walking and of walking before running. But to say the truth Milford had thought of nothing but beginning at a full run. He had taken it for granted that his place was at the top, and he had not considered that his success depended in any measure upon his personal exertions toward getting business in the first place. In other words he never had dreamed that he should have to hunt up his first client and, as it were, drag him up into the office and coax him to the point of employing his captor. Moreover, he nursed high notions of the dignity of his profession; as if he had lived in the golden age of the law, when to be a lawyer was a very high honor.

As he walked down the street to his office, that sweet spring morning, he reckoned himself to be of much less importance to the world than any previous calculation had disclosed. There was an almost unbear-

able humiliation in the thought that even Mrs. O'Slaughtery, a poor widow, was quite able to do more than he in the battle for bread, and that his freedom to prolong his own struggle for two months more depended upon her generosity and pity.

He had nearly reached his office when he felt a hand, not slight by any means, laid on his arm. He looked down and saw the short, fat form of the auctioneer Downs beside him. The familiarity of the man's act was far from agreeable to Milford, even in his despondence, but the cheerful and hearty voice with which he spoke, in a manner compensated for the liberty of his touch.

"I haven't spoke to you, I believe, Mr. Milford, about getting your sales," he said in an apologetic way, "but when you have a sale I hope you'll use your influence fer me. I try to cry sales as well and as low as any of 'em."

Milford shook off the man's hand from his sleeve and turned upon him a look of dignified but extreme anger.

"When I sell I shall not sell at auction, thank you," was the only response he could utter. It never came into his mind that Mr. Downs might mean those public sales which lawyers sometimes control for their clients. His brain was so filled with visions of the most probable outcome toward which his professional venture was swiftly tending, that he could not imagine

any thing less doleful than a sale of his books and furniture in the auctioneer's suggestion.

Downs was a rare judge of human faces and human motives, as indeed his business required him to be. He looked with a sudden sharp inquiry into Milford's eyes, and almost instantly his countenance exchanged surprise for a curious flash of discovery.

"Oh, you don't catch on right, I mean legal sales, like administrators' sales and guardians' and——"

"Never mind, I see, I understand," Milford hastened to say, his face flushing a little. "I was absent-minded. I shall be glad to remember you at need, though, of course, for a while yet my opportunities to serve you will be few."

"Sometimes I see chances to throw business into a lawyer's hands," Downs replied, "and I may be able to turn something into yours. One good turn deserves another, and I believe in helping them that needs help, and them that helps me."

They walked on side by side, the lawyer tall, straight, gloomy-faced; the auctioneer, short, good-humored, heavy, red-visaged and apparently happy. When they reached the foot of the stair-way leading up to Milford's office, Downs said:

"I'll come up, when I get time, and have a talk with you. We board at the same house and we'd ought to be friends."

"Of course," said Milford, "call. I shall be glad to see you."

"Well, good-morning; good luck to you for the day," added Downs, extending his soft, thick hand, which Milford took with a warmth not usual. There was something in this short interview not to be put into words. Milford still felt it when he had seated himself at his desk in his office. He had opened a volume of the state statutes before him, but the mood of the moment did not permit study; the glaring façade of the new court-house across the street was quite as interesting as the pages of the book. In fact, he sat for a long while gazing through a window at a patch of soft blue sky visible above the roof of that temple of justice, within which as yet his profession had not called him. Poignant as was his suffering he did not fully realize his situation, but sat there baffled and benumbed. He heard the drays on the street with some thought of how much more successful and happy the brawny draymen were than his present out-look promised that he could ever be. It is not in human nature for one in his predicament to hold the reins of philosophy with a steady hand; at bottom we are all, in a degree, sentimentalists and railers at fortune in the hour when it deserts us. Milford considered, with a bitter sense of revolt, the fact that certain vulgar and uneducated young men whose offices were near his appeared to be doing a thriving practice. Of what value were his

years of hard study, his hereditary gentility of bearing, his really fine intellect? Jones, over the way, who habitually said "I done it," "he had went" and "they seen him comin'," was growing rich in pursuit of a learned profession. Jones had begun a few years before as a justice of the peace, passing from that office into the condition of a full-fledged, popular and prosperous lawyer. Milford could not account for such an instance. In a vague way Jones appeared to be a usurper and a fraudulent presentation. To see him and hear him make a speech to a jury, or address a court, was enough to drive a sensitive person from the court-room. He bawled and screamed, he beat the air with his enormous hands, he used slang and did awful violence to the simplest rules of grammar; but he gained his causes. To Milford not only was this an anomaly, it was an outrage upon professional life, an insult to civilization and the cause of progress.

His reflections, however, seemed to rebound upon him, as it were, with an accelerated force, as if Jones's success really demonstrated the theory of successful practice at the Indiana bar—or rather at the Bankersville bar.

What was all his learning in the dead tongues—all his familiarity with the classics of many languages—all his fine mental training worth, when pitted against Jones's crude, elephantine practicality? Success is what a poor young lawyer most desires, and Jones cer-

tainly had reached success by the shortest route. To Milford's mind here was a clear example of the emptiness of culture. By an obscure mental process, the solution of the whole matter appeared to be that brute energy, personal courage, and large combativeness were the chief elements of success. Not that he reasoned to such a conclusion, for there was no systematic discussion going on in his mind; his thoughts were broken and scrappy, but they held in them the conclusions to which most despairing men have arrived sooner or later. Somewhat to his surprise, when he had been in his office about an hour, Downs entered and unceremoniously took a seat.

"Got a question I want to get your opinion on," he said at once. "I'm into a little trouble, or about to be, which is all the same."

Milford looked at him absently and responded with a monosyllable:

"Well?"

"It's not exactly a law question, I admit," Downs proceeded to say, with a curious smile on his round red face, "but when a fellow's at the end of his row he wants counsel, law or no law. Did you ever get clean busted in a strange place, Mr. Milford?"

The lawyer colored rather violently, despite his usual self-control, and made no answer before Downs began to speak again:

"Anyhow, *I'm* busted to a dead certainty and I owe

Mrs. O'Slaughtery for three weeks' board, and I don't see what the old Harry I am going to do. I can't get no sales to cry, nor nothin' of the sort ; it kinder 'pears like bad luck has set down on me, sort o' made a mash on me for good. Makes a feller feel kind o' suicidal-ceous."

Milford gazed into the auctioneer's genial eyes with a strange, cold stare. His misery was not of the sort that courts company, and he was not of a turn to relish coarse humor or to make a man like Downs his confidant ; but he felt the stirrings of sympathy, nevertheless. He remembered now that he and the auctioneer had come to Bankersville at about the same time, and he understood the situation perfectly, he thought. Still, as he had no word of comfort to offer, and felt the responsibility of keeping his own humiliating secret, with the added weight of the dread of its discovery, he sat in silence, gravely eying his visitor.

"I thought you might know of some way by which I'd be able to get a job, or may be you could lend me twenty-five dollars for a few days," Downs added, in a rapid tenor voice, with his face growing almost comically grave. "I never was in just such a ridiculous old fix before."

"I'm very sorry, indeed, but it's quite out of my power to help you," said Milford, moving uneasily in his chair. Then after a short pause he added: "I am sure you will come out all right, however."

"Oh, of course, I'll get there somehow, you bet your life," exclaimed Downs with energy, bringing his fat hand down upon the green covering of the desk with a loud slap; "I don't give in for trifles; but—but—it's mighty uncomfortable to be so hard up. You, in your business, can't have no idea of such a thing, I reckon."

"Money is close now and business is very dull," said Milford, with an inward flush of shame for the dry, indifferent tone of voice he had assumed. He had to say something.

Downs looked at him with eyes that had in them a demure twinkle unobserved by Milford. A considerable space of silence ensued, during which Milford took out his watch, a gold one, and Downs consulted his, a large silver one.

"I s'pose I could put this up with the pawn-broker down here," the auctioneer remarked, as he returned the time-piece to his pocket; "you know Jonas down here on the corner? He takes things into pawn. I guess I can soak this old turnip for five dollars, may be."

Milford's face flushed with some quick thought which he did not put into words. Downs noticed this, but only said:

"Well, I must stir about, somethin's got to happen right soon in *my* case; guess I'd as well interview Jonas."

He got up and walked to the door, where he turned and dallied for a moment, then half-jocularly added:

"A fellow mustn't be too proud to do what is necessary. Good-morning Mr. Milford."

"Good-morning," responded Milford. At the foot of the stairs Downs stopped and chuckled, his face growing very red. "I've give him a hint, anyway," he thought, "and if he don't take it, sooner or later, I'm mistaken, poor fellow!"

Milford, when he felt quite alone, took out his watch again, and turned it over and over in his hand. It was an elegant and costly old piece, set round the rim with alternate diamonds and rubies; an heir-loom of precious associations, whose intrinsic value, though considerable, was as nothing compared with its immaterial worth. His face grew very dark with the cloud of his distressing thoughts. He was wondering if indeed he should have to go down to the pawnbroker's before long. He replaced his watch and began walking back and forth across the office floor. Now and again he stood for a time by a window overlooking the street, wherein a business-like stir was observable, and gazed down upon the heads of the comers and goers. It seemed an inscrutable thing to him that he could not discover how to become a part of all this profitable activity. Again and again it occurred to him that Downs was, in a measure, the sort of man he should like to be, a man not ashamed to acknowledge his strait and plucky enough to meet an emergency with the directest expedient. At the same time, however,

he recognized, or thought he did, that such shifts as Downs could resort to with impunity would not serve his turn as they would that of the auctioneer. Each man must mold his own life after the plan he has chosen and can not utilize with impunity the patterns and details of others, so he reasoned; but he kept recurring to the thought of the pawnshop.

It was nearly noon when a heavy step on the stairs attracted his attention, and there appeared in the doorway, a little later, a tall, heavy-looking young man, whose face, as smooth as a woman's, looked the picture of health and earnestness. This new-comer was dressed in a well-fitting suit of grayish tweed and bore himself confidently, as one who knew what he wanted and who was sincerely bent upon getting it.

"Is this Mr. Milford?" he asked, walking directly up to the lawyer and offering his hand. "My name is Chester Lawson," he added, in response to Milford's polite bow and inquiring look, "and I should like a talk with you if you are not engaged."

"Certainly, take this chair," said Milford, "I am quite at leisure just now."

The two men sat down with the desk between them.

"To come to the point at once," said Lawson, with a very charming smile on his smooth face and in his wide open frank blue eyes, "I'm a fresh limb of the law, graduated from Ann Arbor law school, and I'm on the look-out for a partner. I haven't got the money to

buy a library and set up for myself, so I shall have to try to do the next best thing, set up with a man who is more fortunate."

Milford could not help smiling. There was something almost exhilarating in the presence of this hopeful young fellow, whose eyes had in them a light like a prophecy of success, and whose voice was so full of enthusiasm and self-confidence.

"I saw your sign below, so I just ran up-stairs and tumbled in. There's nothing like trying, you know," continued the boy—for boy he looked, although he must have been eight-and-twenty. "I thought I might make some sort of arrangement with you. I should be willing to pay something for the chance to begin in an office like this." He looked around over the neat furniture, the pretty wall-paper and the long rows of calf-bound books with an almost greedy expression in his fine courageous face, then added in a more matter-of-fact tone: "what would you think of giving me a chance—what terms would you propose? Of course I could not pay a great deal down."

Milford scarcely knew what to say, so suddenly had the matter, full of such importance to him, fallen at his feet.

"I should feel like taking time to consider your suggestion," he said, feeling guilty of a departure from perfect frankness; he was, in fact, eager to close a bargain.

"Oh, certainly," replied Lawson with a perceptible abatement of his eager manner, "when would you be ready to make me a proposition, if at all?"

Milford sat a moment in silence, but his brain was acting with great energy. He felt the terrible danger of letting the present opportunity slip; it was the wave of fortune.

"Well, after all, I am not sure that we need to take another time; now will do as well," he presently said. "How much can you pay in cash?"

The young man compressed his lips a moment and bent his brows, as if making a silent calculation. At length, having reached a conclusion, he looked up and resuming his smile, said:

"I can spare three hundred dollars now and I will have two hundred more in about a month."

"You would want an equal partnership with me, I suppose," suggested Milford.

"Certainly, and just a little more," said Lawson. "I should want my name in the lead, that is, I should want our card to read Lawson & Milford."

There was a painful silence at once. Milford's face reddened and paled alternately and it was with a great deal of effort that he controlled himself. The demand had the force of an insult, though made without arrogance.

"You begin early with your exactions," he at length

said, somewhat stiffly. "We may as well talk no longer." Milford rose.

"Of course, if you like," said Lawson, rising also and taking up his hat. He looked a little disappointed, but he was smiling still. "I thought it best to be frank and outspoken from the start. I'm going to make things move like a cyclone when I begin work. I'm going to work in the lead, too; but I'm willing to pay for the chance and the place. I mean business!"

The two men looked straight into each other's eyes. Lawson moved as if to go, then turned and extended his hand:

"Good-morning, Mr. Milford, I hope there's no harm done; I'm glad to have met you," he cordially exclaimed, his face still beaming pleasantly. "If you should chance to reconsider your answer before I find a partner, I shall be glad to hear from you. I am stopping at room 30, Sudley's Hotel."

Milford took the young man's hand with more cordiality than might have been expected, and held it while he said:

"You certainly are both frank and enthusiastic. No doubt we can come to some sort of terms, if we try hard."

"Why, I should think we ought," responded Lawson. "It can't matter much to you about the style of the firm—that is about which name comes first, and it does

matter to me a great deal—I am very ambitious, Mr. Milford.”

“Oh, as to that,” said Milford, “I suppose that the style of the firm name is a mere matter of form; but the older member’s name usually appears first.”

“Very true, I grant; still I may as well say to you that it is for the precedence that I propose to pay you, that and the use of your library and office. So far as the practice, the business and all that is concerned, I expect to bring it here. You can’t work up a practice, Mr. Milford, that’s not your strong point.”

Lawson spoke all this in a tone at once firm, authoritative and pleasing. Milford never before had heard any thing like it; he had never dreamed that any man could dare address him with such liberty; and yet there was nothing suggestive of intentional impudence in the young stranger’s manner. On the contrary, a magnetic personal force seemed to go with what Lawson said, and Milford felt an obscure but strong attraction toward him, notwithstanding a certain doubt of his moral fiber.

They sat down again with the desk between them, as before, and after some further talk Lawson took paper and pen and hastily dashed off a memorandum of their contract. He did this before they had verbally agreed upon any of the terms. While he was writing he kept on talking, his genial face glowing with the

warmth of his feelings, and his pen scratching loudly on the paper.

"I think you'll like me, Mr. Milford, and I know I shall be delighted with you," he was saying. "There's no end to my capacity for work, and I've always done whatever I've tried to do. You need a partner like me, a genuine steam-engine. We'll shake up these Bankersville lawyers and show them how to do business."

Milford watched him with undisguised wonder. There was something admirable in his vim and self-assertion that had the effect, indeed, of suggesting an engine running under a steady, but enormous pressure of steam. The fact that the young man's face was so clean-shaven gave a certain individuality to his square-set jaws and full, strong chin. His hands were nervous and shapely; indeed his entire physique was a fine embodiment of manly strength and health.

The thought grew in Milford's mind that here was an ideal Westerner, or rather a real one, a young man with a force *de jeune dieu* and formed of a stronger clay than that of older countries, and whose breath of life was indeed a vigorous element. The Southerner's romantic imagination discovered in the Westerner's resistless realism something that appeared to embody that fascinating neology known as young Americanism; not the young Americanism of slang, but that of

the strongest meaning, the spirit of our amazing progress in material achievement.

"Well, here it is in rough form," said Lawson, picking up the document he had been draughting. "I think I've got it substantially right."

He proceeded to read it over aloud, emphasizing those passages referring to his own standing and privileges in the firm, pausing occasionally to offer a rapid comment or explanation. The contract was evenly balanced in its provisions, saving that Lawson's position at the head of the firm seemed, by an implication held somewhere between the phrases, to project his business leadership and to accentuate his personal superiority.

Milford signed the paper with a certain sense of abasement, though he did not fairly understand why it thus affected him, while at the same time he recognized the probability of a great financial gain through the operation.

Lawson handed Milford a check for three hundred dollars, and a note for two hundred payable thirty days after date.

So the first legal transaction ever consummated in Milford's office was the beginning of a career for both the interested parties. The style of the new firm was *Lawson & Milford, Attorneys at Law*.

III.

ON account of the negotiations with Lawson, Milford was late starting to his dinner at the boarding-house of Mrs. Nora O'Slaughtery, and when he came near the cottage he met Downs going down town.

"You'd better hurry along, captain," exclaimed the auctioneer, "or the widder'll have a fit, sure. She's taking on dreadful, thinks you've absconded or something."

Milford shrugged his shoulders in spite of himself, and made no other response. He could formulate no rejoinder to such a bit of vulgar familiarity, and yet he rather liked Downs, and did not wish to offend him. They had passed each other, when Milford turned and said:

"Wait a moment, Mr. Downs."

The auctioneer promptly faced about.

"I can let you have twenty-five dollars now, if it will serve you to take the loan," continued Milford, putting his hand to his breast-pocket.

Downs involuntarily and with electrical quickness glanced at the lawyer's vest; but the plain gold chain was still there, and, presumably, the watch also. A curious change came over his face.

"What time have you, Mr. Milford?" he inquired. Sure enough, the old bejeweled piece came forth all right. "About the money," he went on. "I've got that all arranged; but I'm more than a thousand times obliged to you, all the same. It's mighty kind of you." He hesitated before he continued: "Had a client this forenoon, didn't you?"

"No," said Milford, instantly taking on his customary dignity of voice and manner, thus perceptibly withdrawing himself from Downs's level. Then, after a considerable pause, he added in a kinder but still distant tone:

"I'm glad that you are over your trouble, Mr. Downs, very glad."

The auctioneer hung his thumbs in the pockets of his vest and said:

"Oh, for that matter, I always manage to get over difficulties, one way or another." He chuckled and made a comical grimace while he was speaking. Milford passed on under the maple trees that shaded the red brick side-walk, and went through the little brown gate of the O'Slaughtery cottage. The widow met him at the door, but if she had prepared any voluble greeting she discreetly repressed it.

"You must have been awful busy, Mr. Milford, to be forgetting your dinner altogether," she very quietly remarked, while he was laying aside his hat and cane.

"Yes, I have been engaged," he answered. "I hope I have not put you to too great inconvenience."

"Oh, not at all, not at all, to be sure, don't think of it a single minute, Mr. Milford. I was just a-saying to Mr. Downs, that you'd been the layst trouble of any boarder I iver had in my loife."

She led the way to the little dining-room, and drew back Milford's chair for him; then she hastened to fetch his soup. He noticed a little bouquet of violets beside his napkin. This, in a mood that did not admit of more than an obscure consciousness of the act, he pinned upon his coat-front. The spring-birds were singing and whistling noisily in the trees near a window. The room was sweet and fresh, with an outdoor fragrance in its atmosphere. He did not look up when the soup was placed before him, but mechanically said: "Thank you."

Mrs. O'Slaughtery glanced at the flowers and blushed prettily. Involuntarily she drew herself a little further away from him, and forgot to offer him the pepper.

He was running over in his mind the singular nature of the whole affair with Lawson, and was wondering what would be the outcome of this hasty alliance. He could not get rid of a haunting sense of humiliation, as if he had sacrificed his dignity and grasped relief at any cost. The thought that he had bound himself for five years to be the partner of a man about whose character and antecedents he had not even stopped to inquire,

was of itself very depressing. Still he did not see how he could have done otherwise; a beggar could not choose, and Lawson certainly had a good face and an honest bearing.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery noted the thoughtful mood, but she reasonably attributed it to Milford's financial trouble, and she pondered how she might lighten his load, while she hurried back and forth arranging the simple courses of the dinner. For once, however, her wits were at fault, and she could not think of any thing she might do or say to cheer him. She was wholly unprepared for the emergency, when, at the close of the meal, Milford took out his pocket-book, and, counting some bills, spread them on the table.

"You gave me credit for two months, this morning," he said, "and it was very kind of you, for I needed it then, but I do not need it now. As a sort of recognition of your goodness, I will pay you for two months in advance." He looked up into her eyes and his smile, though grave, was cordial and kindly.

She recoiled from him as if scared, throwing up both her hands to the level of her face, which was full of surprise.

"Oh, dear, no! you mustn't do it at all—you mustn't dream of such a thing, Mr. Milford," she exclaimed, with a shaking voice; "keep your money yourself till you can spare it."

Milford, who did not feel that there was any occa-

sion for a display of sentiment, arose, leaving the bills on the table, and turned to go from the room. Mrs. O'Slaughtery snatched up the money and sprang in front of him.

"I can't permit this, indade, I can't at all!" she cried, "take it back or me heart will break entirely!"

"Of course, if you really desire it," he said. "I meant it as a matter of good faith. I see nothing wrong about it."

She threw herself toward him and thrust the money into his hand, then she covered her face and began to cry.

He was astounded and stood speechless before her. A queer sensation as of some vaguely-defined revelation took possession of him, but he shook himself free of it and said, in the most matter-of-fact way:

"After all, Mrs. O'Slaughtery, your house is too far from my office, and I really think I shall have to go to a hotel."

She snatched her hands from her face still wet with tears and gazed at him with flaming eyes.

"There, now! There, now! This is what I get for all my kindness to you; you turn straight around and desart me; you are real mane, so you are! You're jist like all the men, you—you—" she broke down again and sobbed aloud. The young man stood abashed, feeling utterly at a loss what to say or do, as the strong handsome woman gave vent to her strange emotion.

"Indeed, Mrs. O'Slaughtery, you do me great injustice," he presently said. "I certainly am very grateful for your kindness to me. If I have offended you in the least measure, I beg a thousand pardons."

She instantly uncovered her eyes again and her smiles shot through her tears, like sunlight through rain.

"It's myself that needs the pardon altogether, Mr. Milford," she said, "I'm such an impulsive creature; you mustn't pay any attention to my outbursts at all."

She very demurely wiped her cheeks and eyes with her little white apron.

Milford could not keep from smiling at this display of Irish volatility.

"I see you making fun of me, too, but that's all right, I deserve it," she went on to say, holding her head to one side and sighing resignedly. "A woman always gives a man the advantage of her; but then, if he's a gentleman, he won't use it at all."

"At least you are in no danger," said Milford, lightly, as he again turned to leave the room.

"Well, I should say I'm not either. I'd loike to see the man that I'd care for in the least. I'm not so susceptible, Mr. Milford, I'd have you to know!" she exclaimed, bridling and clinching her hands. "I think it's very wrong in you to hint it, I do!"

"Calm yourself, I beg of you, I meant nothing of the sort, I—" Milford was saying, but she interrupted him.

"Oh, dear! calm myself, indade! Ain't I calm as a June morning, I wonder? What is there to excite me, at all? Not a thing in the world, I'm sure!"

Her posture, as she spoke, was one denoting the most airy indifference and she ended with a laugh which was almost merry.

Milford, though he joined in the laugh, did so with a sort of protest in his heart, and he was glad enough to take advantage of the moment to get out of the house. Mrs. O'Slaughtery followed him to the door, however, and called to him as he passed through the little gate:

"You'll be up to supper, Mr. Milford, won't you?"

But he affected not to hear her. Indeed, he had already begun to think of his office and his new partner. Somehow the smooth, strikingly boyish and yet masterful face of the enthusiastic young man kept deepening its impression; but the nature of that impression was in itself a puzzle to Milford. As he walked on, thoroughly lost in the whirl of his thoughts, a phaeton drawn by a stout old pony came near the sidewalk, and a benevolently sonorous voice addressed him:

"Mr Milford, a moment, if you please."

The lawyer halted and turned half about, pulling together his faculties with a perceptible effort. The person who had addressed him was a very fresh-faced, snowy-haired, heavy-set old gentleman, whose beard,

white as his hair, fell in wavy, shining ripples upon his ample chest.

"I wanted to tell you to be sure to attend our chapel this evening, as we have improvised an occasion for a lecture by Dr. Liberalis, of Boston, who chances to be in the city over night. He is a pronounced advocate of woman's rights, you know, but a great thinker and a good man, notwithstanding."

As the old gentleman delivered this little speech he gazed benignly at Milford, and upon ending glanced half slyly at the grave-faced young woman who sat by his side. The last-named personage was not only grave-faced, she was good-looking, beautiful indeed, and quite youthful enough to be called a girl, albeit she was taller as she sat than the man beside her.

Milford had lifted his hat and bowed profoundly in acknowledgment of the gentle, friendly greeting, as much on account of the high respect and admiration he had for the old gentleman as in response to a quick but sedate glance from the young lady's dark-blue eyes.

"I shall be very glad, indeed, to hear Dr. Liberalis," said he, "and I am greatly obliged to you, Dr. Wilton, for informing me of the lecture, though, frankly speaking, I have no patience whatever with the so-called woman's rights movement."

Dr. Wilton smiled and turned his fatherly eyes upon his companion in the phaeton, who was now regarding

Milford with the look of one having something to say, without the right to say it.

"My daughter is somewhat inclined to take the other view, I believe," the old man demurely said; then, as if he had suddenly discovered something of importance, he added, apologetically:

"Why, I believe you have never been introduced to my daughter, Mr. Milford. She has been away."

He proceeded to make a formal introduction; so extremely formal, indeed, that the two young persons smiled a little more than is usual upon such occasions. Milford doffed his hat again and did not fail to note what beautiful teeth Miss Wilton showed when she spoke.

"We meet as enemies, Mr. Milford, I am sorry to know," she said, with not the least touch of any thing but pleasantry in her voice. "I refuse to give any aid or comfort whatever to those who combat the progress of women toward the highest freedom."

"I beg a truce with a view to an unconditional surrender on my part," he lightly replied. "I could never be a hero in such a war as you suggest."

"It is hinted," said Dr. Wilton, "and I fancy that there's some force in the hint, that Dr. Liberalis has come here for the purpose of trying to influence our college in the interests of those who wish to see us adopt the system of co-education—that is to persuade us to admit young ladies into our classes."

"And my father thinks that the thing would be a calamity as dreadful as St. Bartholomew's Day or the Lisbon earthquake," Miss Wilton exclaimed, her voice modulated to the gentlest respectfulness when she mentioned her father, and rippling into an almost merry tone as she made the comparison.

"Not so bad as that, Marian," rejoined the old man, "but it is hard for me to see any merit in the proposition, aside from any consideration of the awful effect that a flock of uncontrollable young misses would have upon the staid character of our school."

"Oh, dear! it must have been a bevy of very rude girls, indeed, that put the old cow in the chapel pulpit the other Sunday!" she said, with a little laugh; "and what a naughty lass it was who put your overcoat and hat on the transit tripod and labeled the improvised effigy: '*Old Sweetness*,' with the added explanation: 'That is to say, his honey is good, but his wax is treacherous!' Oh, these girls are very demoralizing!"

Dr. Wilton laughed retrospectively, and Milford's college memories helped him to appreciate the force of the young woman's allusions.

"At all events, you will come to the lecture," said the old man, as if to close the interview, "the subject will be sure of a novel and interesting discussion."

"Yes, I will come," Milford answered, "and, so far as the co-education of sexes goes, I'm not sure but that I shall favor the lecturer's views."

"Thank you, thank you," exclaimed Miss Wilton, and there was a considerable show of genuineness in her manner as she continued, "I do hope you'll help us in our darling scheme. We want to write *inter sylvis academi* on our cards, as freely, and, if we like, as ungrammatically, as the young gentlemen do on theirs."

The old pony's head had been turned by this time, and the little equipage trundled off, leaving Milford to go his way. He walked on, his step somewhat the lighter after the conference, and it was with some difficulty that his thoughts struggled back to the discussion of his business prospects. Miss Wilton had made no definite impression upon him; still there lingered a very pleasing sense of her free, fresh grace of manner and speech, together with the suggestion of force and earnestness that lay below her half-bantering tone and words. Perhaps he felt brightened and encouraged in a degree by the cheerfulness and good-comradeship of the father and daughter.

Dr. Wilton was the president of the college at Bankersville, a Presbyterian institution, known far and near as a quiet, wholesome, well regulated school for young men, a school which had been besieged for some years by certain enthusiasts bent upon turning it into a university open to both the sexes. Milford, who was himself a Presbyterian, had sought the acquaintance of Dr. Wilton soon after coming to Bankersville, and had found the old gentleman a most genial as well as con-

genial friend. He had heard the daughter, Miss Marian Wilton, spoken of frequently, but never in a way to excite his imagination or even his curiosity. In fact, he had been led, in some way, to think of her, when he thought of her at all, as a mere child, too old to be petted and too young to be interesting. Still, it is a fact that a bright, earnest girl, rarely fails, when she crosses the field of a young man's vision, to leave a pleasurable disturbance of some kind. Possibly Milford was peculiarly susceptible or receptive just then, being in the transition-state leading from a species of despair to a broad sense of relief if not of hopefulness. Miss Wilton did not vanish entirely from his mind, even when he again took up the thread of his business relations.

When he reached the office he found a considerable change in the arrangement of things. The furniture had been shifted a great deal, so that the room looked strange. Lawson was in conversation with an angular, nervous man whom Milford recognized at once as a leading banker and speculator, but with whom he was not acquainted.

"Mr. Milford, let me introduce you to Mr. McGinnis," said Lawson, "Mr. Milford, my partner, Mr. McGinnis, of the Farmers' National Bank."

While the gentlemen were shaking hands Lawson stood by rubbing his palms together and smiling in a bland, satisfied way.

"I brought Mr. McGinnis up to show him our office,

and I told him we wanted to get acquainted with all the leaders of business in Bankersville," he went on to say. "Of course you know that Mr. McGinnis stands at the head of the list. Not that we can hope for any fees from him—knows too much law himself for that, but his influence is magical."

Singularly enough Mr. McGinnis received this rather broad and arid flattery with evident relish and as food he was used to.

"I may be able to throw something in your way, gentlemen," he said with the air of one quite sure of his power and its value. "I have a way of controlling a good many strings of business." He took a cigar from an open box on a desk. "You begin on a good brand, Mr. Lawson," he continued, "but I guess you'll be able to keep up to it."

"Oh, the best is quite good enough for me," Lawson lightly exclaimed, "I am easy to suit when I get what I want."

The banker laughed and looked at Milford, who did not appear much impressed with the importance of the occasion.

"Let me give you young men some good advice," Mr. McGinnis said, in the course of a short conversation which followed. "Mr. Lawson must be the active, working member of the firm, while Mr. Milford sits in the office and looks wise. That's the way to rope them in and fasten them, ha! ha! ha!"

"Just my idea, exactly," exclaimed Lawson, laying his hand on the banker's shoulder. "You're up to all the latest fashions, Mr. McGinnis."

Milford did not relish all this; he felt something almost repulsive in the atmosphere, and yet both Lawson and McGinnis wore the look of honesty, and their conversation seemed too light to be considered in any estimate of character.

When the banker was gone, Lawson seated himself in Milford's easy-chair, leaned back, and with his feet crossed on the top of the desk, smoked very deliberately. Evidently he was pleased with himself. "Well, how do you like my way of beginning?" he inquired, looking up into Milford's rather somber face with a broad, genial smile, but with no sign of really desiring an answer to his question. Indeed, he appeared to have settled the matter in his own mind. Blowing a cloud of smoke back over his head, he added: "We'll be a popular firm, from the word go, see if we won't. The editor of the *Scar* will be up presently to interview me. I've got that arranged. Nothing like the press, you know. And, best of all, I'm going to take Miss Crabb to the lecture this evening; she's the new reporter, you know, come here a few days ago from Ringville to take a place on the *News*. Oh, trust me to advertise!" He slapped his heavy, shapely leg as he finished and laughed merrily.

Milford looked at him half annoyed and half aston-

ished, but there was an undercurrent of admiration in his feelings as well. What superb self-confidence this young fellow had, and how easily he was beginning a career! Milford's mind naturally exaggerated the effect of Lawson's rapid advance in the direction of giving *eclat* to the new law firm; it was as if clients were already knocking at the door; and yet he felt a heavy reserve of protest against this broad assumption of personal importance by his partner. When, after a while, the editor of the *Scar* came in, with his shrewd face and *pince-nez* eye-glasses, to hold the interview, and Lawson boldly asserted that the new firm was the best equipped of all the firms in Bankersville for doing a large and successful practice, and that already it was "forging to the front," Milford was astounded as well as mortified; but the editor took his notes in a matter-of-fact way, asking a question now and then, with the evident purpose of making the outcome of it all a most taking advertisement, and without any show of suspecting that Lawson was in the least given to romance.

"That's cheap at ten dollars," the young man exclaimed, turning to Milford when the editor was gone; "the country people all read the *Scar*. We'll rope them in, as McGinnis said, don't you think so?"

"You speak as if our office were a gambling den, or a deadfall of some sort," said Milford. "I don't fancy the comparison."

"It all goes to the same tune of 'rope them in,'" responded Lawson with a coarse, loud laugh.

IV.

MILFORD went back to Mrs. O'Slaughtery's boarding-house for supper, notwithstanding his determination to remove his luggage to a hotel, and it was with unusual care that he dressed himself for the lecture. Not that he was inclined to attach much importance to the occasion or to the matter of his clothes ; it was as if he intuitively foresaw that his life was going to begin afresh, as it were, with some new element added to its substance. It is not often that a man is permitted to note so sudden a change in the tide of his experience as this which Milford now fancied he felt. True he was of a very imaginative temperament, much more a poet than a lawyer, in fact, so far as mere bent of mind could go, but Lawson had been a genuine realistic revelation to him of how easy it is for some men to gather up with one swift reach of the hand the beginnings of a career, and whilst he felt a pang of humiliation, as he acknowledged his own suddenly borrowed impetus, he caught something of the exhilaration of movement after his long and distressing inactivity. Dressing himself with conscientious care this evening was a part of the new order of things, an involuntary recognition of

the change in his worldly prospects. How strange it is that nearly all the so-called smiles of fortune are rooted in something very like self-abasement to the recipient of the precious light those smiles irradiate! Personal advancement, that is, the projection of one's self beyond one's acknowledged limitations, in so many instances is at the cost of giving up some principle by which one has long been safely guided. Below the satisfaction, or rather the charm of any sudden victory in our worldly struggle, there lurks a sense of some unworthy element which has entered into our life to disturb our enjoyment of our winnings.

Milford, while he did not see how he had transgressed any moral statute or any ethical tradition, nursed a certain sense of not having held on to his high standard of personal dignity. He felt that he had surrendered, in some way not noble or wholly worthy, his superiority, his individual birthright of precedence in this dicker with Lawson, and yet he grasped with the clearness of prophecy that it had opened a new field of life to him, which, if he would enter it, would yield him a fortune. Not that he viewed Lawson as some splendid genius come to crown him with sudden success; it was the insight, if but a glimpse, which Lawson's irrepressible young Americanism had given him of the methods by which meteor-like notoriety and swiftly-heaped fortunes are

compassed. Already he saw how certain of his dearest scruples would have to be abandoned and how his old-fashioned rules of life would have to be repealed before he could grasp the success after which Lawson was going to clutch so vigorously. Perhaps he foresaw that Lawson was destined to lead, in fact as well as in name, the business operations of the new firm, and that by this means the young enthusiast was to become in a large degree the shaper of his, Milford's, destiny. Of course, all this belonged to that state of mind which follows relief from a great strain, and which precedes the reforming and rearranging of the lines of life. Milford's outlook had been so gloomy and despair had been averted in so unexpected a way at the very last moment that he viewed his turn of luck as almost miraculous, and was inclined to magnify its possible meaning and promise, as well as to exaggerate the enormity of its moral cost in the loss of dignity and self-respect. It had been his purpose and hope when he opened a law office in Bankersville, to obtain a practice in his profession by force of his legal learning and qualifications, and he had not thought of the possibility of failure, until failure had in fact come to him, along with the discovery that success in the world depends more upon what he had heard vulgarly called "cheek," than upon high intellectual attainments and a dignified course of action.

He went to hear the lecture, and found it trite, illog-

ical and full of the tricks long since made stale by demagogues. Lawson was there with Miss Crabb, to whom he paid more attention than he did to the speaker. Milford noticed, however, that Miss Crabb, who was a tall, rather angular, but vivacious blonde, did not allow the occasion to pass without making a great display of note-taking. Her fingers appeared to be surprisingly nimble.

Dr. Wilton was conspicuous in the audience, on account of his fine, benevolent face and wealth of snowy beard. His daughter sat beside him, apparently absorbed in the lecture, and Milford wondered if it were possible for a young woman of her evidently clear and well-trained mind to be interested in so transparent a tissue of platitudes. He could not help glancing at her whenever the speaker advanced some well-worn sophism clothed in threadbare phrasing, to see if he could detect in her face any evidence of disgust or weariness, but her clear, grave eyes made no sign, and her firm, sweet, half-pouting lips retained their beautiful composure throughout the reading. Something in her air, and in her perfect equilibrium of pose, affected him with an obscure sense of her superior qualities of character. It was as if she were undergoing with superb fortitude the test of torture. At least his imagination sought this rather unromantic solution of the fascinating enigma she appeared to him. He felt sure that she could not acknowledge

herself in accord with this narrow zealot's broken screed of unreason, no matter how earnestly she might adhere to the larger doctrines of the "woman's rights" philosophy, and yet her face gave no evidence of dissent; her eyes were on the speaker's face, and her delicately-modeled ears appeared to take in, with very earnest, if not eager attention, every word of the long, florid sentences. Miss Crabb seemed to think of the lecture merely as an occasion for getting something to print in the *News*, without any reference whatever to its actual merits, and Milford was conscious of a doubt as to which was the more agreeable to him, Miss Wilton's perfect poise of attention and possible interest, or the nervous reporter's fussy bursts of note-taking. And yet his eyes returned and returned many times, to rest, for the moment that politeness permitted, on Miss Wilton's fine head and graceful shoulders.

When at last the lecture was over, Milford made his way out of the room, oppressed with a very unsatisfactory state of mind. In a sort of large vestibule he found Miss Crabb introducing Lawson to Dr. Wilton and his daughter. It seemed that Miss Crabb had been acquainted with the doctor from her childhood, though she had come but recently to Bankersville.

"Mr. Lawson has just assumed the lead in a law-firm just established here," she was rapidly saying, "and I am prophesying his quick and brilliant success."

"I certainly wish you success in your noble profession, Mr. Lawson," Dr. Wilton gravely said, much in the tone of a professor speaking to a juvenile student, holding the lawyer's hand for a moment.

"Thank you," said Lawson, bowing with that peculiar half grace of his, the smile on his smooth face accentuating the pleasing dimple in the center of his chin. "I shall make a rousing effort to realize your kind hope, and, frankly, I feel perfectly sure of myself."

"Oh, he takes his place with all the *aplomb* and audacity of genius," exclaimed Miss Crabb. "He undoubtedly is one of the irrepressible young men of our day."

Milford passed on into the open air, leaving the group behind, just as Miss Wilton was saying something to Lawson, who was regarding her with frank admiration and pleasure beaming from his eyes. The people, after streaming out of the chapel doorway, straggled off in groups along the many diverging paths of the college campus among the dim shadows under the trees. The moon was on high and shining with great power, but its light was so broken by the lace-work of boughs and the mingled tassels and young spring leaves that it barely tempered to the eye the gloom of the wide grove. Milford walked slowly, enjoying the woodsy freshness of the night air while indulging irrelevant reflections upon the lecture and its surroundings. Presently Lawson and Miss Crabb,

going very fast, passed him just as he was about to emerge from the campus into the street.

"Oh, she *is* just *charming*," Miss Crabb explained, in her rapidest manner, "and she is *so* intellectual, too, and so well-read; she has a mind like a man's."

"She is superbly beautiful, as well," remarked Lawson. "I never saw such beautiful eyes. I dare say she is an exceptionally intelligent young woman."

"Yes, she is," said Miss Crabb. "She has just returned from a finishing course in a Boston school and a tour abroad. She is well rounded." Miss Crabb uttered this last phrase with an emphasis suggestive of its wealth of meaning.

"Ah, indeed, there is where I saw her. I felt sure I had seen her before to-night," Lawson exclaimed; "it was in Venice, I recollect now."

"Oh! you have been in Europe, have you, Mr. Lawson? Why, I shall add that to my news items."

"Yes, I squandered my little patrimony in foreign travel," he responded, "but you needn't print that. It's the oats that I'm going to sow, not the crop I have reaped already, that I want to be judged by."

"Certainly, I understand that very well; you wouldn't be a man if you were willing for the whole truth to be known about you," said Miss Crabb, with the utmost complacency, "but your wishes shall be respected; your carousals in London and your shortcomings in Paris, and——"

"Mercy! please stop," he exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders, "these trees may have ears!"

She laughed a little at his dramatic simulation of concern; indeed, she may have suspected that his acting had a modicum of genuine reality in its composition.

"She passed me on one of those famous bridges in Venice," he said, resuming a thought which he seemed to relish, "and I have never seen her since until this evening. Nor had I ever seen her before that meeting. Strange, but we recognized each other at once; I am sure it was mutual."

"Romance," exclaimed the reporter, almost gayly; "a genuine bit from Jane Porter or Ann Radcliff. I may print *that*, mayn't I?"

"Not for the world—the whole world," said he. "My past must be a sealed book, a dreadful mystery, for a young lawyer can't afford the luxury of a record. Let me start like one of those whirlwinds generated on a dry, hot day, rushing from nowhere forth upon my chosen career."

He spoke rather grandiloquently and in a bantering way, but Miss Crabb, who delighted in catching at remote suggestions, fancied that what he said was not wholly in jest. Furthermore, she allowed her imagination to perceive a touch of incipient tenderness in his version of the momentary meeting on the storied bridge, and of the instantaneous recollection of it by the actors a little while ago.

"Bankersville needs a whirlwind or two," she presently replied. "There never was a town so staid and stagnant; it's a great, big, sweet, unruffled Presbyterian pool, and every day is Sunday in its neighborhood."

"Never mind, I'll stir it to its bottom and raise such waves as its shores never have felt," he rejoined, as if coming back to himself from distant thoughts. "I see great possibilities in the situation and surroundings."

"I'm glad you do," she said. "Enjoy the fancy while you can. The bubble will burst soon enough."

"Like the great soldier, I come led by the star of destiny and attended by the god of battles," he said, turning upon her his clear, strong eyes, and laughing a little as he spoke. "You need not fear for my bubbles; they defy even the breath of fate."

Milford heard a part of this conversation, then walked slower, to avoid hearing more. He had scarcely reached the street when Dr. Wilton and his daughter came up to his side in the full flood of moonlight; their home was but a few steps away. He walked with them as far as the gate, where, as they paused, the doctor said:

"Did you ever before chance to hear such stuff?"

Milford stole a furtive glance at the young woman, but she was very composed and was quietly smiling upon her father.

"I should think," the young man answered, "that

the lecturer was not in his happiest mood this evening. We are all subject to 'off' periods, when every thing refuses to serve our turn."

"Shouldn't you feel better to be quite frank and outright, Mr. Milford," said the young woman, "and say that you have been listening with prejudiced ears and in an unreceptive temper?"

"Daughter, daughter, you shouldn't put things offensively," Dr. Wilton chided. "You are too enthusiastic."

"After all," Milford hastened to say, "I fear I am guilty as charged by Miss Milford. I did go to the lecture prejudiced and stiff-necked, and came away still more so."

She laughed as one who returns to amiability with a child's whole-heartedness, and with the ring of perfect sincerity in her voice said:

"It must be too late for you to come in with us to have our quarrel out now, but my father and I shall expect you to call. Sometimes I don't ride my hobby, and am not at all disagreeable."

Milford left them with the feeling troubling him, that in some way, this clear-eyed, earnest girl was going to get a hold on his mind. He was not so young that he did not understand what this might mean. On the contrary, he acknowledged to himself with candor that it would be possible for him to love her.

He went into his office to smoke before going to Mrs. O'Slaughtery's, but his contemplative mood was

broken up by Lawson, who came in with some business schemes to talk over.

"I just now heard that the city council has no attorney," the young man exclaimed, making a plunge at the cigar box. "Miss Crabb told me, in fact, and it strikes me that I ought to be able to get the appointment."

"Well, even if you could get it," Milford responded, "the business is all petty and annoying and the salary is a mere trifle."

Lawson drew down his brows in a thoughtful way, and, without noticing Milford's objections, added :

"I'll try to see McGinnis soon in the morning ; I think he might manage it for me."

"It isn't worth while, I assure you, Mr. Lawson," urged Milford. "The office is a barren one."

"Barren lands are sometimes full of ore. Possibly I might find the gold. I make bold to say that the office of city attorney of Bankersville can be made a very honorable and a very lucrative one," Lawson replied ; "but the old motto : first catch your carp, etc., is to be kept in mind."

Milford did not say any thing further, and Lawson remained thoughtful for a while. Presently, with a flash of enthusiasm in his face the latter sprang to his feet and exclaimed :

"There are possibilities in this scheme worth a hard struggle. I'll have that appointment if the thing is at all within my power."

V.

BANKERSVILLE was an Indiana town, but it did not differ from other towns of the older western states on that account. It may have had eight or ten thousand population, rather less than more, and it had wide streets, clean side-walks, beautiful homes and many long lines of maple trees. Notwithstanding Miss Crabb's charge that it was stagnant, it was thrifty, "stirring," and, to a degree, rich. For a few years last past Bankersville had experienced what is indefinitely called a healthy growth in both its business strength and its general outward appearance of prosperity. It had, in fact, fallen swiftly into city ways and was beginning to indulge in certain luxuries peculiar to centers where culture and extravagance go familiarly hand in hand. It was noted for two things above all others, its college and its banks, indeed the banks were so numerous and so prosperous that one might have fancied a connection between this fact and the name Bankersville; but the record showed a different origin for the appellation, a derivation from the cognomen of an illiterate farmer, Jere Banker, who had, about the year 1830, donated the plat upon which the lately built and really handsome brown stone court-house now stood,

and it may be added that this same Jere Banker, long before he died, had seen his entire farm swallowed up in the growth of the town. All the country around Bankersville was extremely fertile and under high cultivation, so that one might drive for miles in any direction, over some one of the many fine gravel roads, between broad fields and always in sight of big red barns and comfortable farm-houses. It was a region of corn, wheat, oats, blue-grass, fat cattle and rotund hay-stacks, as well as a paradise of healthy brown-faced youths and rosy-cheeked, bouncing lasses. This fat land fed Bankersville and made it grow and thrive. No large city was very near, so that this fortunate town ruled, with more or less tyranny, over a space much wider than the county of which it was the seat of justice. People liked the place. Visitors came and bore away its praises into distant quarters of the country. Nomads of the press, those optimistic, opal-eyed, always welcome correspondents, wrote long letters to the metropolitan newspapers describing the maple groves, the tasteful homes and the literary aspirations of Bankersville, until the name Boston of the west came to be something more than a mere joke.

The population of Bankersville had been influenced to a considerable degree, by the rigid morals and excellent teaching of the college whose beginnings as an institution had been contemporaneous with the founding of the town. The aristocracy of the place, such

aristocracy as it was, very naturally had been from the first mailed with Presbyterian armor and actuated by clean and pure motives. College Hill, as that quarter of the town near the park-like, densely-shaded campus was called, was that part of the town which first gave evidence of a dawning prosperity by the building of certain plain but decidedly spacious and comfortable houses, the homes of the professors. These particular homes, together with the stately college pile and the forty acres of campus, remained the chief objects of interest in Bankersville long after it was known as a city, and to them were directed all visiting strangers. Indeed, Bankersville folk wore their honors with a complacency and outward humility that covered a deal of pride. The strictest among them scarcely demurred when the phrases "Boston of the West," and "the Hoosier Athens," were politely bandied around, phrases, by the way, that made the mayor and common council feel bound to give a literary flavor to certain occasional ordinances and proclamations. The college had sown broadcast a taste for polite learning to an extent that had generated a smack of genuine culture, so that a few Bankersville people went so far as to pronounce such words as *calm*, *half*, *can't*, *laugh*, etc., with the sound of *a* in *father*; but of course the final *g* was snubbed and the subjunctive mood remained unconquerable.

Liberality is an excellent word, and it might be

applied in its most liberal sense to Bankersville, for the little city's broad streets, wide grassy lawns, its cleanliness, its home-like homes and its substantial fences were nothing if not indicative of the hearts of the people. Munificent liberality, too, had been bestowed upon the college by rich men, until now the corporation was possessed of some millions in excellent funds. Nor was the city body much behind that of the college in financial condition ; it was out of debt and had a large surplus in the treasury; therefore, when Lawson with the aid of McGinnis got the office of city attorney, it was an honorable if not a pecuniarily profitable one. The *eclat* with which the young man flung himself into the vacant place was a clever bit of advertising, which did not fail to fetch good returns. Men began at once to drop into the office of Lawson & Milford with this or that question of law or of fact, touching the corporate affairs. Many young lawyers of Bankersville maligned and vilified themselves for not having seen this opportunity, which Lawson had so brilliantly turned to his account. They failed to understand that it was the man who had lent force to the chance, and not the reverse.

Lawson was much talked of because he made food for talk. He spent much time in the streets seeking the acquaintance of leading men from all parts of the country, taxing his memory with faces and names, nor did he neglect any of the public meetings in the " out

townships," no matter what their nature. He was not an orator, but he could talk very well before a crowd and he made friends easily.

At first those lawyers who chiefly controlled the business of Bankersville were strongly inclined to speak humorously of Lawson's pretensions, but somehow this humor was short-lived; success compelled respect, and then his manner of dealing with men was so frank, and he had such an open face and such a hearty, taking voice, that it was impossible not to like him. Every body looked upon him as upon a brilliant, precocious boy, so much did his smoothly-shaven face and tender complexion overcome the effect of his mature stature and of his evident knowledge of the world. This delusion, or illusion, was greatly in his favor, for the American people have a passion for helping young fellows who are smart and clever, especially if they are "fine-looking," that is, of strong physique and of courageous bearing. *Avoir du pois* is quite as essential to the average senator as intellectual strength; and a suave manner is as valuable as the most liberal education to the ambitious young American. Youth, of itself, goes for more in our country than it goes for anywhere else upon the earth. Let it be known that a genius is mature and the effect will be to deaden public interest in its doings. On the other hand, the promise of youth, the morning freshness of achievements by beardless heroes and

budding heroines takes all the land by storm, especially if the callow genius have a rumor of personal beauty as its supplement and auxiliary. The stage, the forum, the rostrum, the "stump" (that American platform so fast rotting away) and the pulpit, give their finest victories to youth and beauty; personal magnetism is the phrase and that means animal force.

Lawson may have foreseen some of the advantages that he was to reap from his appointment to the city attorneyship, but it would be making too broad a statement to say that he even dreamed of what a wide field it would open to him. He did clearly understand that the feeling in favor of public improvements was deepening rapidly in Bankersville, and he saw, in a confused way, the possibilities connected with a full treasury and a people anxious for the money to go into schemes for the glory and prosperity of the city; but the mass of his thoughts in this connection was chaotic enough. Milford felt, with a satisfaction never before experienced by him, how, day after day, and week after week, signs of a prosperous practice appeared in the law office. By degrees the sense of an indirect self-abasement in the matter faded out, or fell behind the knowledge that he at last was coming to his own, and he began to assert himself in the questions of business that arose in the course of affairs. He was a much better lawyer than Lawson and a far more graceful and

fluent orator ; but Lawson took the lead and kept it by sheer force of tact and enterprise.

One day near the middle of summer, a time when many of the lawyers were off on vacation tours, Lawson came in to the office, smoking as usual, and began talking about a scheme before the common council for the building of a city water-works.

"I am opposed to the whole thing, from beginning to end," said Milford, with a promptness and decision that made his partner open wide his clear blue eyes. "It's a job of the most dangerous kind."

Lawson pondered a moment, then, with a quick gleam of satisfaction in his face, said :

"Well, perhaps it's well enough for one of us to oppose the measure while the other supports it. It will show up—" he stopped short and pondered again. "Oh, for that matter," he continued, "we needn't care much about it. It will affect us very little. Upon the whole, you'd better stay out of the discussion altogether. It might hurt our practice ; besides my official connections render it a very delicate subject to us."

Milford felt a glow of resentment pass over him, but he made no reply until he had fully mastered the feeling, and even then he merely said :

"You can not afford to have any thing to do with it."

"Never fear for me," exclaimed Lawson, laughing lightly and shrugging his shoulders with an assuring

motion. "I'll be on the *inside* or nowhere, and—" he hesitated a moment before adding: "in the lead or not turning a wheel."

Milford did not feel justified in giving the worst interpretation to Lawson's words, and yet he could not wholly repress the disgust that arose in his heart for what they seemed to imply. He looked steadily into the young man's eyes and said:

"Of course, water-works *can* be built without any jobbery, but I don't think they will be in this instance, therefore I do not think our firm can afford to touch the subject."

"Oh, no, our firm must steer clear of the whole thing," responded Lawson, "you are quite right. Besides, there's nothing for us to do, as lawyers, in that connection. It's a mere business affair between the city council and the water-works contractors. Oh, you keep out, it's no place for you."

"I don't need your advice, but I shall act upon it, nevertheless," said Milford in as light a voice and manner as he could command, "and you might profit by my example."

At this point some one entered the office; Lawson sprang up, with a profuse show of delight, to welcome Mr. McGinnis. "Come into the other room, here," he said, after a word or two of greeting, "Milford will excuse us." He took the banker by the arm and they turned toward the door of a consultation-room.

McGinnis looked back over his shoulder and laughingly said :

“We are going to plot treason, rebellion and all other terrible things that a good man like you doesn't approve of.”

Milford did not relish the humor any more than he liked the secrecy at which it openly hinted. He did not fully understand how McGinnis, a strict member of the church, could dare to enter into a scheme to rob the city, and yet he felt that something of the sort was but poorly hidden in the plotting now going on. A right-minded man, who has seen a great deal of the business world, is quick to discover the badges of sharp-dealing and of doubtful moral purpose.

The consultation between McGinnis and Lawson was a long one, at the end of which they left the office together, and Lawson returned no more that day.

Milford had been invited to take tea at Dr. Wilton's, where he should meet a young man who was beginning a very promising literary career, and whose name had been tossed, with flattering accompaniments, from newspaper to newspaper, for some months, and whose new book had reached its twentieth edition. This young man, Arthur Selby, was a distant kinsman of Dr. Wilton, a second cousin, perhaps, and had just returned from a long course of study in Germany. It was a matter of some interest, Milford thought, to meet such a person, and he was

not at all prepared to see a little round-shouldered, pudgy fellow, whose face was rather dull and heavy, and whose air was that of a *blasé* dry-goods clerk. He had almost to stoop in order to shake hands comfortably with this famous young novelist, and he felt a sense as of a sudden lesion affecting the high admiration he had hitherto given the literary calling, to think that this was the man who had, by a single wave of his hand, as it were, changed the public taste and made romance take the place of realism. He certainly did not look like a writer of romance, with his somewhat bald head, his common place eyes and his square-set jaws, to say nothing of his spectacles with their slender gold claws hooked over his rather large ears.

"Ah, Mr. Milburn," the author said, not quite able to get Milford's hand and name at the same effort, "you are an ex-confederate soldier, I believe—a colonel, of course."

"Milford, not Milburn, is my name. No, I can not claim the military title," said Milford, "and I do not consider my connection with the rebel army a subject of any present interest."

"Perhaps your view is the best possible, Mr. Milford," Selby promptly replied, with a sort of apology in his perfectly modulated voice. "It is the *now* and the *future* that should concern us, not the past. I am a good deal of a neologist, I train with the young school."

"There are so many young schools," said Miss Wilton, "one must be an expert to keep free of all."

"I shouldn't care to avoid any one of them," Selby responded. "Every new thing adds a little, at least, to the sum of progress. I feel this more sensibly with every day I spend here in the West. What a wide-awake, free-for-all, go-as-you-please society you have!"

"But our society isn't any thing of the sort," said Miss Wilton, with that rare blending of earnestness and sweetness in her voice which never fails to make one forget that a controversy is in hand. "Our society is not free-for-all, nor is it go-as-you-please, in the least. If that's the mistaken view you start out with, your forthcoming romance of western life will be absolutely worthless."

Selby laughed merrily, his eyes lighting up and his whole face for a moment giving forth a flash of the genius that was in him.

"You can't frighten me in that way," he exclaimed. "My romances don't depict life as it is, but as I think it should be in order to make it dramatic and interesting. You forget that I am a romancer and yet I am one of the realists."

"I don't like you on that account," said Miss Wilton. "This world is no place for romance of any sort; it is a matter-of-fact world, a world in which men's chief concern should be to be honest, earnest, industrious and to get on. What's the use of romance?"

Milford was looking at her as she spoke, and he saw, beyond her light manner and half-chaffing tone, the real earnestness with which she enunciated her doctrine. He recognized on the instant, too, how much her way of putting it resembled Lawson's. This high valuation of success for its own sake, this emphasis on the importance of business, of affairs, of getting on, set him at once to thinking of the burden of Lawson's every word, phrase, thought and desire. He involuntarily ran his eyes over her fine form and clear-cut, energetic features with a swift acknowledgment of something akin to disappointment.

"I have been telling Miss Wilton that she ought to be a stock speculator, or at the very least, a banker, she is so very matter-of-fact and financial," said Selby, turning to Milford. "I am sure she would soon make a decided success."

"I am going to be a lawyer," she quickly interposed, "I am reading now."

"You shock me," exclaimed the author, with a simulation of surprise. "Going into the profession of dishonesty! You will be a failure; you can't do it."

"Be careful, Mr. Milford is a lawyer," she said. "He might object to your sweeping phraseology."

"Not at all," said Milford. "It's an old piece of stage property. The lawyers are scarcely willing to forego the luxury of being mildly persecuted by those who make fiction a purpose in life."

"Good!" cried Selby, almost gleefully, "that's a capital slap back, and I deserve it. I can safely rely on myself for getting into ridiculous situations. I thank you for the rebuke."

Milford could distinguish a certain quality of politeness in Selby which seemed to have its root in a genuinely good heart, a quality which tempered the author's egotism down to the consistency of a humor almost jolly. He felt a little glow of liking for this small, plump, self-possessed, unassuming and yet all-assuming man, take the place of an unfavorable impression. The author's attitude was evidently that of a person standing outside the world and watching

"With an eye serene
The very pulse of the machine,"

an attitude by no means critical, or fault-finding, but simply that of intense though playful analysis.

The door-bell rang, and Miss Wilton, following the hospitable western custom, went to answer it herself. She soon re-entered with Miss Crabb. The latter glanced around the little parlor with the comprehensive swiftness caught from her profession. When her eyes met those of Selby she almost started, her surprise was so strong. Evidently she had been expecting to see an Adonis or an Apollo and she was thrown entirely off her guard. Live literary lions were not to be met often in Bankersville, however, and she must be content even with the ridiculously little one now before her.

"I have known you, Mr. Selby, in the pleasantest way, perhaps, that it is possible for one person to know another," she began, "your book, that charming medium of introduction, has made us friends already. You saw my critique of it in the *News*, I suppose. Of course I couldn't do it or myself justice in so small a space, but I tried not to slight the subject. You didn't mind my saying that your women are insipid?"

"Oh, I don't ever mind such a thing, it makes me feel comfortable," he said, "insipid women are so rare that I consider them desirable. It was very kind of you to say that; but I must acknowledge that I never read critiques under any circumstances. It's too much like witnessing a mild form of autopsy. Upon the whole, book reviews are nonsense, mere stuff."

"You're too frank, too ingenuous. Critics are as fond of being read and appreciated as the novelists are. I shall demolish your next book," she retorted.

Milford was glad of an opportunity to speak a word or two with Miss Wilton, when, after tea was over, they lingered awhile in the cozy little library. She touched a stout legal-looking volume on a table and said that it was her especial object of study now. He looked and saw that it was Blackstone's commentaries, then lifted his eyes to hers with an almost impatient glance. She understood his feeling and arching her brows gave the book a little push.

"You don't approve," she said, "but why? Surely

it is a clean and honorable profession. It can not hurt me."

He looked steadily into her eyes and saw something there that thrilled him strangely. She stood up strong and self-reliant before him, a superbly beautiful woman, and he felt the force of her will as unmistakably as he felt the power of her beauty. Her eyes fell before his, presently, and just the faintest blush suffused her cheeks.

"I am determined to show the world that I can do it," she added.

"May I help you?" he asked. "I shall be glad to give you any assistance in my power. Suppose you let me be your legal preceptor?"

She colored a little more, but looked into his face again without any confusion and said:

"I already have a teacher. Mr. Lawson is giving me lessons."

But, despite her calmness, there was, or Milford fancied it, just a touch of preference in her expression, as if she regarded Lawson as the more competent person. She may have guessed his thought, for she dropped the subject at once and turning into a little bay-window put aside the curtain. Through a panel of glass a fine view of the moonlit valley of the Wabash appeared, framed in like a picture by the black walnut mullions. In the middle distance the river wound lazily, fringed with a scattering growth of ghostly

plane-trees and divided by gleaming sand-bars. The suburban houses of Bankersville further down the valley clung along the bluffs overlooking the wide, fertile fields of "bottom" land now dotted with golden shocks of wheat.

"Mr. Selby says this is the most charming view this side of Italy," she remarked, standing aside to let Milford look. "He flatters us a great deal, I think. He is a very close and curious observer."

It must be remembered that the literary atmosphere of Bankersville was perceptibly troubled by the coming of Arthur Selby, whose visit, a mere resting moment of his flight across the continent, ever afterward would be looked back to with complacent pride by the dwellers on College Hill. Selby himself appeared wholly unaware of being a lion, but he made it continually obvious that he was a novelist and that novel-writing, or rather, romance-writing, was all important to the whole world. He makes no figure in our story and I drop him forthwith, asking the reader to keep in mind the probability that such a character as Selby, with the prestige of his fame, might have left lingering in the air of Bankersville an influence which may account for some slight literary tendencies hereafter traceable.

"I should think his occupation a thoroughly delightful one," said Milford, catching something of Miss Wilton's respect for the novelist's fame; "it must give

him a freedom as large as his desire. Now the law is different ; it is narrow, stationary, rigid and dry."

"I am surprised to hear you say that about your chosen business, your life vocation," she quickly, almost resentfully exclaimed ; "you are not serious, I hope?"

"Yes, I am very serious, indeed. Tell me what genuine prize is open to the lawyer, will you?" He spoke lightly, almost indifferently, but she felt the undercurrent of his sincerity.

"Fame, fortune, a high social career, official life—every thing!" she said in a low, earnest tone, her voice perceptibly affected by a sudden enthusiasm. "The power of oratory, the consciousness of a great personal influence, the ability to sway a people. The prizes are innumerable and priceless!"

He looked at her in silence, while he gathered together some sweet impressions of her fine womanly strength and of her singularly fascinating intensity of character set behind a calm, almost classic face.

"What is the mere story-writer's calling, his fame, his possibilities, as compared with what may lie in your career? The comparison falls flat—it fills me with something stronger than impatience to think of it!"

She said this with evident repression of a deeper feeling struggling in her heart, a feeling having its source in her ambition.

"Oratory is charming, as you exemplify it," he re-

sponded, "but I haven't the gift; besides, the ground has all been worn into lifeless sterility; the day is passed when eloquence counted for any thing."

"You are chaffing, you are not in earnest. I understand what you are trying to do, but I shall not be driven from my purpose, or let my enthusiasm cool in the least."

"You jump to a conclusion," he exclaimed, laughing. "I would not discourage you if I could. Haven't I offered to help you?"

"Perhaps I am too suspicious of you," she said, almost merrily. "I retract it all. I am glad you are willing for me to be a lawyer."

"But I am not willing," he gently urged, "I am simply withdrawing from the unequal discussion." Then he returned to the thought of Selby's great and easily-won success as an author.

"It is a shame in fact," said Miss Wilton. "Think of an Eastern man, a Yankee, running through Indiana at a gallop, so to speak, and then rushing back to Boston or New York to write a novel of Western life! What will Mr. Selby know of Bankersville and its people after a three days' sojourn here? Only yesterday I read in a Washington newspaper that a celebrated novelist of Boston was staying for a week at Willard's, and that in the course of an 'interview' he had said that he had been getting together the material for a novel of Washington social and political life. Think

of it! A week at a hotel and then a great realistic presentation of society at our national capital!"

Milford laughed, and she continued with suppressed vehemence:

"How can a man be content with having his fame rest upon such a basis? I should scorn to be a little fiction-scribbler if I were a man!" She was silent a moment, then added: "I like personal force, directness, truth. I can't bear the thought of a diminutive—a feminine—a—you know what I mean—a successful little person who does nothing large."

"You don't like the analysts in fiction, then?"

"No. Think of a man making it his business in life to write those silly kettle-drum reports of fashionable life, and then think of a Pitt, or a Webster, or a Napoleon!"

She involuntarily glanced across the room at Selby with a sudden, half-scornful impatience. Milford's eyes followed her gaze, and there flashed into his mind a sharp realization of her meaning. Selby looked very little like an ideal man and the basis of his fame certainly was slight, seen from Miss Wilton's point of view. For a moment literary distinction took on a very unattractive aspect.

"A novelist," observed Miss Wilton in a lighter tone, "is not a great man, no matter how famous—he is little and trivial at best."

VI.

THERE was an element in Milford's life and experience, fortunately rare in the lives of men, which troubled him a great deal, and sometimes appeared to him an insurmountable barrier to his progress toward success. When the facts of this experience are placed before the reader, as I now purpose to place them, in their most simple conditions, he may judge for himself what effect they might produce in a life set within American limitations and amid the influences left over from our great sectional war. Milford had been reared and educated in Georgia, his parents having migrated thither from Virginia, and he had entered the Confederate army in 1862, at the age of seventeen. Not long after becoming a soldier the impression began to grow in his mind that he was fighting on the wrong side. Naturally a thoughtful, earnest, conscientious youth, this impression, as it matured into conviction, troubled him greatly. In his heart the feeling that he was lending himself to treason without the excuse of believing himself justified by circumstances, was supplemented by his discovery of a widening of his sympathy with the spirit of abolitionism, a spirit which he had been taught to

look upon as an abomination. His predicament rapidly became torturing, for on one side were his mother and father, his sisters and all the sweet endearments of a cultured and elegant home life; on the other the stern call of conscience and duty. Nor does this statement suggest all. He was fitted by nature to be a daring and intrepid soldier, and his ambition called him toward the goal of a military hero. He felt the impossibility of going over to the enemy and fighting against the South, but not more keenly than he felt the awful turpitude of remaining in the Confederate army and battling for the continuance of human slavery and for the destruction of his country, with not even the ghost of a conscientious excuse for it. Moreover, the question continually arose in his mind: could he desert? There seemed to be an element of manhood that recoiled from the thought; then, too, what would his mother and father and sisters say? Beyond all, and deep down in his nature, was the fact that he was a Southerner, within the most Southern meaning of the word, to the manner born, with the chivalric, fighting impulse left as a hereditament in his blood by the grant of a long line of proud and bellicose ancestors. The future historian must not overlook this question of heredity when he comes to treat of the causes that brought about the great war between the North and the South; nor must he fail to find in it that fiery cement which held vast armies together

where father was against son, brother against brother, and even mother against child, in the wild struggle which perfected human freedom and purged the conscience of the world. In the case of an individual, Milford, for instance, heredity would have its special effect, but, after all, it is easy to imagine how tenaciously it would linger in any case, even after a profound conviction had destroyed the moral support its deep-seated prejudices had leaned upon. Of course there would be no trouble on the score of actual conscience, but, unfortunately, conscience often seems to be under obligations of no slight sort to one's affections and sentiments and to that subtle law of one's nature which binds one to home, kindred and family tradition. Milford could not rid himself, in those dark days of carnage, of that second conscience which urged him to close his eyes upon the questions of patriotism and human liberty, and to hold fast to the loyalty of a son to his parents and of a Southerner to his section. Nevertheless, his higher conscience at last prevailed, and he abandoned the South and its army. A deserter? Yes and no. He could not choose the vulgar deserter's way of leaving his comrades. True to a romantic notion of what would be the brave and chivalrous course, he one morning rode boldly up to the head-quarters of his general, and, making his salute, handed that officer a small package, saying as he did so :

"General, here is money enough to pay for this horse I am riding and for these arms I bear. I now take leave of the Confederacy and its army. I have been on the wrong side as long as I can suffer the thought, and I shall henceforth be governed by my conscience."

With another salute he turned and rode away, putting his powerful horse into a wild run.

The general and his surrounding officers stood in amazement, watching the best soldier of the command tearing off in that mad style.

"He's drunk, the impertinent scamp!" said the general with gruff directness.

"No, I saw his face, and I know him too well," said a staff officer; "he meant just what he said."

Quick orders were given and swift pursuit was made, but Milford escaped and found his way to the North.

His daring action robbed his offense of its cowardly, sneaking element, but it was desertion, all the same, in the eyes of his family and friends, and it was unpardonable, it was immitigable. At last a Milford had disgraced the name. What followed is of little consequence to our history. The most torpid imagination can not fail to construct a fair outline of Milford's predicament. He had fought with the South, that was much against him in the North, even after the war was ended, and he could not afford to have it known that he was a deserter, though of the most con-

scientious and picturesque sort, for there is something in the thought of desertion which suggests the most contemptible character and the most cowardly man in the world. To have been a rebel was bad, but to have been a rebel deserter was certainly unpardonable. So, while Milford's conscience was clear, his situation was one peculiarly harassing at times. He could not, with proper self-respect, return to the South, and there was much to annoy him in the treatment he received at the hands of the Northern people. Not that anybody tried to persecute him, but being looked upon as an ex-rebel, he often had to meet rebuffs and hindrances on that account. I have said that his conscience was clear; this does not mean, however, that he was free from those mental falterings natural to one in his situation. Often enough he upbraided himself for what he had done, and tried to reason to the conclusion that, after all, patriotism is fulfilled when one fights for the flag that is over one. It means a good deal for a man to give up his parents, his sisters, the home of his childhood and the country of his forefathers for conscience' sake; but it means a great deal more when to his exile is added a sort of necessary disgrace, in his own eyes, and an unutterable abasement in the eyes of those for whose love and confidence he would give the most.

Here, then, was the secret source of Milford's almost morbid sense of isolation, as it was also the cause of

his failure to make his way in his profession. The little patrimony that had found its way to him after the death of his parents, had barely sufficed, as we have seen, to put him into his law-office with a fair library and nothing to depend on but the chances of the law as they fall to a dignified, reticent stranger in a wide-awake Western town. It is probable that Milford was too much inclined to attribute his failure to get business solely to the aversion which he fancied these Northern people felt for him as one who had been a Confederate soldier. The truth is, he had been treated with great kindness by the few persons with whom he had formed an acquaintance, and with indifference, as a matter of course, by those who knew little of him.

Since Lawson had come into the office, however, Milford had seen a great change in things. He made acquaintances every day, and among the acquaintances many friends. Clients began to seek the services of the firm, and there was no longer a doubt as to its success in a financial way. All this would have been quite enough to satisfy a man less scrupulous and sensitive than Milford. Even he had his moments of intense satisfaction, and often he became quite absorbed in his professional work; but he could not altogether smother the feeling that his connection with Lawson was a vulgar and debasing one. Again and again the thought came to him of how the part.

nership had been forced upon him by his condition, and how he had been compelled to accede to all of Lawson's terms through sheer coercion and under the stress of humiliating poverty. It seemed to him at times that Lawson had acted the part of a soulless trickster in the whole matter. And yet he could not make it quite plain, reason as he might, that the young man could not defend himself in all his acts on honorable business grounds.

Lawson had been successful with his scheme for city water-works, and while there were rumors of a large number of bonds going into his hands as his part of a questionable transaction, there was no proof of the fact and the matter was hushed up. From this time on McGinnis and Lawson were fast friends, the banker appearing to have discovered rare business qualities in the young man, and they began to operate together in real estate schemes, Lawson doing the active work. Nearly all the law-business proper that came to the office Milford attended to, willing enough that his partner should be on the street and away on speculating jaunts with McGinnis.

As for Lawson, conscious of the power he was rapidly acquiring, and enjoying to the full a sense of his influence in Bankersville, he strained every faculty to accelerate his popularity, and to impress the public with the belief that he was growing rich. He was a "large, handsome fellow," according to the reporter of

an Indianapolis paper, who interviewed him, and he bore about him the air of perfect self-reliance which succeeds with the populace. His companions were, for the most part, bankers, large dealers in live stock, real-estate men and curb-stone brokers. His every thought was a financial one, and his every act was an effort to reach money.

"I despise little gains, I hate mere wages," he said to Milford one day, just after they had divided a small fee. "Life is like a dribbling, drought-dwarfed stream, under such limitations. I shall never be content until money comes in gushing torrents, pouring into my till from every direction."

"Enormous wages usually imply dirty work, I fear," Milford rejoined. "Grand fortunes are suggestive of the fool's luck or of the knave's audacity."

Lawson laughed, fingering a heavy gold watch-seal he was lately affecting and rolling a dark cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"The fools and the knaves, with their luck and their audacity, appear to be making it lively for the world just now," he presently said. "Wheat is giving men fortunes in Chicago—prices are climbing all the time." He slapped his heavy thigh after the fashion of a financier who feels his prosperity in the very flesh of his limbs. "I'm in on the tide," he went on to say, his smooth face all aglow, "and every minute is coining money for me. I put in \$2,000 last week and have

been buying every day, going right along up with the market, and if it don't break on me between now and to-morrow, I shall close out twenty thousands ahead."

Milford looked at him with open doubt, but only for a moment. He saw that the flush on the young man's face was, indeed, the speculator's fever, the unquenchable hell-flame of the gambler's life.

"I hope you will lose; it is your only chance for future safety," he said, in a tone of voice expressive of mingled pity and disgust.

"I take my chance," Lawson remarked, with cool indifference to his partner's scruples. "Nothing venture, nothing gain."

Milford often found himself thinking of Lawson as of a brilliant, self-conceited, spoiled boy, a big-hearted, ill-directed youth, drifting toward moral ruin; and yet this boy was but one year his junior and was far his superior in knowledge of the world.

Lawson closed out the wheat deal just in time; the market broke with a crash a few hours afterward, carrying many men to ruin. The news of the young man's luck soon got abroad and it was strange and instructive to note how his sudden impulse toward wealth lifted him in the regard of the people of Bankersville. He did not try to conceal his own pleasure in the fact of his prosperity; but he did not lose his head. He turned on the market, selling now instead of buying, and was successful again.

"I'm out now," he exclaimed, coming into the law-office in high spirits, "I've hit the bulls and the bears in turn, and now I see that I'd better quit. Thirty-seven thousand dollars will do for one month."

Despite his deep-seated prejudice against all sorts of gambling, Milford could not beat back a rising admiration of Lawson's pluck and equilibrium. Success is a mighty argument and the successful man has a prestige that overrides a legion of objections to the methods he has used. There is something fascinating to the average imagination in the bold force and daring of genius, even if it be an outlaw who is in question. Superiority, championship, even in the prize-ring, can not fail to elicit a certain sort of admiration.

McGinnis had been the inspirer of Lawson in the direction of his ventures in the Chicago market; but his success had, in fact, no bottom save in sheer luck. He had chanced to go in with the flood and out with the ebb, reaping the fullest advantage of the movements of the market. But he was cool enough and shrewd enough to see that he had ridden good-fortune far on toward the stumbling point, and so he dismounted with his spoils and turned his eyes in other directions. McGinnis saw this evidence of what he called "level-headedness," and was more than ever impressed with Lawson's ability and promise.

"He'd make his mark on Wall Street right now,"

he said to his friends; "that young man is a prodigy, I tell you."

As a matter of course, the whole of Lawson's attention became absorbed in schemes disconnected from the practice of the law, and he often said to Milford that he might consider their partnership at an end whenever he should see proper.

"Of course, I know my name is worth a good deal to the office, but you needn't consider that," he said, "act for your own best interest, Milford, and do not take me into account. I'm all right and I want you to do the very best you can."

His manners were not patronizing, nor did he affect superiority. He was cordial, earnest and outright; but Milford resented a certain matter-of-course indifference to the outcome, which he fancied was observable in Lawson's face. Still he shrank from asserting this resentment by a rupture of the partnership, though he would not have acknowledged that he was considering, even remotely, the benefit he was gaining from the mere fact of Lawson's popularity. Such a benefit is hard to realize in a clear way and hard to cast aside out of mere self-respect, say what we may.

Lately Milford had been going pretty often to Dr. Wilton's, where he always found himself comforted by the quiet atmosphere of that indescribable earthly paradise, a happy home. Mrs. Wilton, a gentle, low-voiced little woman with smooth white hair and a pale con-

tented face, treated him, and every other guest, for that matter, with a beautiful motherly kindness, and the doctor, whenever free from college duties, was a charming host.

It was restful, after the annoyance and bother of a day's legal details, to find himself in the little library with Miss Wilton, even if she did occasionally talk shop and air a few of her newly-acquired law theories. Her voice was soothing and her enthusiasm, always kept well in hand, was infectious. She had nothing in her air or ways that indicated the typical strong-minded woman, but there was a suggestion of power in her attitudes as well as in her bright, clear, finely-chiseled face.

One evening, late in autumn, Milford called and found Lawson already there. This was not the first time that the gentlemen had met in this library, at about this hour in the evening, but somehow it was, to Milford at least, a very unwelcome occurrence. Miss Wilton had met him at the door with the usual gentle and charming welcome in her voice and eyes; but he had quickly observed that Lawson was sitting in the bay-window overlooking the Wabash, Milford's favorite place, and close by him stood the low chair just left by the young woman. It was a small matter, but it filled Milford's soul with a sudden pain.

"Good-evening," exclaimed Lawson, "our firm is

ably represented upon the present occasion. I claim the close in the argument, however."

"You are inclined to put in that claim upon any and every occasion," Milford responded. "I'll take the matter under advisement."

"We have been enjoying the fine November moonlight on the river," said Miss Wilton, "it is magnificent to-night."

Milford imagined a hint of apology or disclaimer in her voice, though she returned to the seat near Lawson. There was a bright wood fire on the library hearth, but the gas had not been lighted.

Lawson was dressed with scrupulous care and was looking his best; a fine light in his eyes and something in his air that suggested supreme satisfaction, gave Milford a dull shock. With an effort at lightness, he said as he glanced out through the window:

"Yes, a very tender view, but have I blundered—have I destroyed a fine passage by my unopportune appearance? I offer a thousand apologies."

"I was just going to sing for Mr. Lawson," she quickly responded. "May I trouble you also with the infliction?"

"Nothing could please me more; I have never heard you sing." He followed her to the little upright piano and stood close beside her, feeling, at the same time, a fear that he was much further from her than was Lawson, over there in the window.

Her voice was a good, clear, honest soprano, not over strong, but rich and flexible, with a world of tenderness in it, just suited to the simple song she had chosen. There was a refrain of a couplet with some covert sentiment in it. The eyes of the two men met once during the singing and there passed between them a silent, quick exchange of a common thought, each divining the other's feeling, each suspecting that the other was on the vantage ground.

When she had finished singing, Miss Wilton turned half about on the piano-stool and looked up at Milford, whose rather somber face showed strangely under the flicker of the fire-light.

"I always feel as if I were compromising myself a little when I sing in the presence of—of men," she said with a bright smile; "they always appear to take it for granted that I consider singing and playing on the piano a very great thing—a good part of life."

"I'm sure we haven't hinted such a thing," said Lawson quickly; "we have been too thoroughly charmed to even thank you in words." He got up and came to stand on the other side of her. "There is a time to sing, you know."

"I don't believe earnest, thoughtful people sing often," she replied; "there's nothing useful or practical in it."

"It is a higher kind of oratory," exclaimed Milford, recalling what she had said to him once, "and it has a

great power to sway the hearts of those who listen. You had me under a spell just now."

"Taking your polite statement in cold earnest, suppose I did touch your feeling for the moment, what of it? It's a poor little thing to do."

"How frank! How deliciously sincere! To touch my feelings is a poor deed, I admit, and not worth doing, but——"

"You are unfair," she stopped him to say, "you know what I mean, Mr. Milford."

"I catch your thoughts readily," Lawson hurried to remark; "you mean that thing is so easily done, that it requires no great effort to accomplish it."

"How stupid!" she exclaimed. "I meant nothing like that. There surely must be some greater achievement possible to a woman than merely showing off a light accomplishment now and then. You both understand what I meant. You know very well that men consider women as mere——"

"Oh, come now," expostulated Lawson, "be good enough to sing another song, the effect of the other has about passed off. I begin to feel dull again."

"No," she said, rising and going into the window, "I'm out of the singing mood. The idea of my voice serving instead of a cigar or a glass of wine, to sharpen the wit of any one! Talk about the noble art of singing! I am ashamed of having acceded to your wishes even once in that regard,"

Milford did not like all this. He felt that Miss Wilton might appear to so much better advantage if she could forget, upon occasion, at least, this hobby she so willfully and persistently was riding. Under her airy acting he saw a current of seriousness that affected him as if he had looked into her heart and discovered a lesion. He was conscious of a fear that she would succeed in destroying the sweetness of her nature. As for Lawson, her artificial resentment of his poor attempts at humor came to him as very naturally assumed under the circumstances, and he treated it as lightly as its spirit demanded. He looked at her as she stood framed in by the window against the background of moon-lit landscape, and he thought her very lovely, very loveable. Milford unconsciously recognized as much and more, for he was aware that her song was still echoing in his heart.

It would be an interesting calculus by which one could so differentiate the feelings of a man as to discover just when and how love gets into his heart. Woman is the variable, human nature the constant quantity, love the controlling increment in the general proposition; but when we substitute the heart of a man for human nature and thus make the problem a special instance, the limit becomes infinitely doubtful, oscillating between the most distant extremes. Take two men, one like Lawson, the other like Milford, and what a difference there is between the effect of this

tender increment as regards the new attitude induced!

With one, love was objective, with the other it was subjective. Milford looked within and saw a new light, he felt a new life, indeed. Lawson looked without and began to consider the effect upon his future. Each felt a change come into his life.

Lawson went close to her and looking down into her face with an intense, smiling earnestness, said:

"It becomes you to appear greatly wrought up, it makes you beautiful."

"I am not wrought up, and I don't like flattery, Mr. Lawson," she very gravely and gently responded. "Why do men insist upon making pretty speeches in lieu of arguments when they talk with women? You ought to feel ashamed."

"I am ashamed," said Lawson. "Ashamed, humiliated, abased. Let's wipe it all out, and begin over again."

"Did you ever know a man who wished he were a woman?" she asked.

"No."

"Well, every sensible woman wishes she were a man."

"What for?"

"Oh, to be free and fight the world."

"But we won't allow it," said Lawson, laughing.

"Because you are bad. All men are bad."

"All men?" inquired Milford.

"Yes, all, every one of you."

"I see a fine syllogism in that," said Lawson, "it runs as follows: All men are bad; all women desire to be men; *ergo*: all women desire to be bad!"

"No, that is prettily turned, but we have a decidedly missionary point in view. The syllogism is: every one should wish to do the largest good; women wish to do the largest good; *ergo*: they wish to be free."

"I surrender, you are free," said Lawson, with a tragic gesture. "Go and redeem the world."

As they walked down town together, the young men were silent for a space, as if each, in the enjoyment of some mood, feared the other would speak. Such a silence is somehow different from an ordinary rest from conversation. Presently Lawson took Milford's arm in a familiar way and, as if the thought had suddenly arisen, said:

"Miss Wilton is a strange girl. I hardly know how to take her, do you?"

"She doesn't especially puzzle me," Milford answered, with his placid reserve bordering on something less polite. Lawson's tone and touch irritated him. "I like her very much," he added.

"Oh, yes, I do too, but she's silly to be thinking of practicing law," said Lawson.

"Silly is a brutal word in such a connection; a word

not usually applied to a lady by a gentleman," retorted Milford.

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed Lawson, with a short laugh. "I have nothing in common with your finical sticklers for sugar-coated circumlocution; a spade is a spade."

"And a gentleman is always a gentleman," said Milford. "There is no room for mistake."

"See here, Milford," exclaimed Lawson, stopping short and squaring himself in a very erect attitude, "what are you driving at? If you mean to insult me, say so and I'll thump this sidewalk with you; I can and will thrash you in a minute!"

Milford recoiled, not in fear, but instinctively from the brutal, vulgar spirit that had sprung up, as if from concealment in Lawson's nature, and was now leering from his eyes and making his smooth cheeks purple. A young, ruffianly prize-fighter could not have looked more animal-like and repulsive.

"Many men are stronger than I, but I am not easily scared. Reserve your force for a higher use," said Milford after a moment. "Men are not beasts." Lawson glared and slowly his attitude relaxed. His face grew almost pale as the passionate blood ebbed from it, then he turned and rapidly walked away, flinging back, as if over his shoulder, the words.

"If not beasts, we both are fools!"

VII.

MILFORD, on coming North, had tried to cast from him, as far as possible, all the peculiarities of Southern character and he had especially labored to get rid of those which he deemed hindrances to his perfect sympathy with the new life he would have to live. He quickly saw many qualities in the Western character that appeared to him well worth acquiring. Here were force, pluck, cheerfulness, heartiness and personal bravery without any knowledge of the old *code d'honneur*. At first he could not understand how gentlemen could quarrel, and even come to blows, without any blood shed or other serious result; but gradually he recognized the higher civilization which allows men to disagree and yet live on speaking terms, to give and take even insults and yet not kill or be killed. He saw that the road to perfect honor did not, in fact, lie over the grave of one's personal enemy.

When he came to reflect over his words with Lawson, he saw that he had done wrong. He had purposely insulted the young man, and he felt the shame of the act. It is true that Lawson's vulgar braggadocio manner had revealed the fact that he was not a gentleman in the best sense of the word, but it had its root in

early associations and training, no doubt, against which he had fortified himself in vain by education and foreign travel. It was Milford's theory that breeding will come out, and that the crude stone polished is crude still. He applied this theory to himself, as well as to Lawson, arguing that his own language and actions during the altercation had shown a weak impulse toward the old Southern plan of insulting one's enemy in order to have an excuse for killing him, a vulgar and brutal plan indeed.

Nevertheless, after all, he was wholly unprepared for the emergency, when Lawson entered the office next morning with beaming face and carelessly friendly manner and exclaimed :

"Hello, you're down early! What a fine morning! I'm going to Chicago and I came in to tell you that Wilkins, the father of the murdered boy, you know, will be in to employ you to assist the prosecuting attorney. Of course that means that you are to take charge of the case. Wilkins is rich, and it is a sort of case in which you can charge a big fee. A word to the wise, you know."

There was no resisting Lawson's infectious cheerfulness and good-fellowship of manner and voice. Evidently he had forgotten all about the trouble of the night before.

"It will be a very disagreeable task, prosecuting that young fellow," said Milford, a little self con-

sciously, then in a heartier voice : "but it was a foul deed ; he deserves the last degree of punishment."

"Certainly he does," said Lawson, "and the dead boy's father, Mr. Wilkins, is determined that he shall have it. He'll not care for the expense of the thing. I had a talk with him yesterday. I told him to see you to-day ; he'll be in after awhile—lives in the country ten miles, you know." Lawson looked at his watch. "It's nearly train time," he added, rising from the chair he had taken. "I must be off. Don't be mealy-mouthed about the fee. It ought to be at least two thousand dollars."

Milford rose.

"There is no doubt of the young man's guilt, I believe?" he asked, as if in the way of trying to throw off some burden.

"Not the least ; he does not deny the deed ; his defense will be emotional insanity, the old, threadbare dodge."

When Lawson had gone away, Milford sat down to think. Here at last was a probability of having a chance to distinguish himself in his profession. He would have the popular side of a celebrated case, for the murder had excited all the country, and the newspapers had discussed it with unusual zeal. Cowardice and atrocious brutality had marked the murder as one of the darkest sort. Another fact added interest to the affair: the slayer and the slain both had

belonged to the best class of country people, so far as wealth and respectable family connections went, and the murder had grown out of a love-passion, the dead boy having been the successful suitor of a beautiful young girl, the daughter of a country parson. It does not require much analysis of such a case to disclose the elements out of which a clever lawyer, gifted with imagination and oratory, could build a resistless appeal to a jury. Milford had read all the details of the newspaper reports touching the crime and was prepared to enter at once upon a consideration of the case from the prosecutor's point of view. He had digested its points pretty thoroughly by the time Mr. Wilkins, a large, brawny, hard-faced man appeared.

The consultation that followed disclosed to the lawyer how strangely the murder had affected the strong-minded but illiterate farmer, whose whole soul had seemingly concentrated itself in the desire for revenge.

"I want him hung es high es a kite, an' I want to see it with my own eyes so's to be shore it's done an' done 'cordin' to law," he savagely said, his square jaws setting themselves together afterward with grim firmness. "I don't calc'late for my boy to be murdered an' then let the feller 'at done it go free," he went on; "not by a long shot. If money an' brains can do it, I'm goin' to see 'im hung."

"I shall be glad to do all in my power to bring him to a just punishment," said Milford.

"That's the talk, lawyer; jest punishment, jest punishment, that's what I want er see. My pore boy," the man's iron face quivered, "my pore boy, he's dead an' I want er see him 'at done it dead, too; that's what I call jest punishment."

"To be hanged is the fate that the law has reserved for the murderer," said Milford, gravely, "and the punishment is, perhaps, not too severe."

"Too severe! Lawyer, I've got nine hundred and eighty acres of the best land in Lincoln Township, an' I'll spend it all or have that villain hung; do you hear me?"

"It needn't cost you that much. If the fellow is guilty——"

"Guilty! What you talkin' about? *I say he's guilty*, an' I say I want 'im to be hung 'cordin' to law, an' I'm here to hire you to see to it; for I wouldn't trust that prosecutin' attorney to do nothin' for me. He's a republican an' I don't go much on them sort. I'm a democrat an' I want that kind of a lawyer. They told me you was one."

Milford struggled hard to keep from laughing, for he felt that any levity would be an insult to the excited client.

"I'm the president of the *Farmers' Detective Company*, an' they're all a-backin' me, an' they say 'at you're the best pleader at this here bar, an' can come mighty nigh jest a-pleadin' a feller in or a-pleadin' him

out any way you want to. Now that's the kind I want ; I want him pleaded into a slip-noose and hung 'cordin' to law. Hung high and choked dead."

"The evidence of his guilt is very strong, and a good jury will be inclined to punish him for so atrocious a crime without much mercy," said Milford.

"We won't have no other sort of a jury, I tell you, we won't have it," Wilkins exclaimed, bringing his heavy fist down on the desk with a loud thump and glaring ferociously. "I'm a-goin' to see to that. I've got my head sot onto havin' a fair trial, a fair conviction an' a mighty dead hangin' to the end of it all, an' don't you forgit it, nuther! There's goin' to be no foolin'." For some reason Milford could find no ready response to such a declaration. He sat and looked steadily into the great shaggy face with its hard lines and little steel-gray eyes. Presently the farmer said: "Well, s'pose we talk business. I'm here to hire you ; what you goin' to charge me? Don't be too steep."

"Two thousand dollars," answered the lawyer, almost hoping that the amount of the fee would end negotiations at once, for, in spite of himself, he was recoiling from the awful responsibility.

"Well, your money'll be ready for you ; go at it, stick to it, never leave it or forsake it till he's hung. I mean business an' don't you forgit it! An', lawyer, ef he's hung I'll put five hundred more to your fee ; d'ye hear?"

The man took a big, sleek wallet from his pocket and counted a roll of bills. "There's two hundred to bind the bargain," he said, handing the money to Milford. "I don't want no half-way pleadin' in this here case; I jest want it naturally druv ahead, like maulin' rails, till the hangin's done. Give it to him raw!"

There was something pathetically awful, if the phrase is permissible, in the stern, grim hunger for revenge which the old man exhibited in his every word, look and act. To see the murderer of his son hanged seemed to be, for the time, the only wish he was capable of entertaining.

Milford was glad when his client had gone; the air of the room appeared clearer and seemed lighter to breathe.

McGinnis, the banker, dropped in soon after, rubbing his nervous hands and smiling.

"Did you get him on your hook?" he asked. "I suppose you did, though, of course."

"Of whom do you speak?" demanded Milford, though he felt pretty sure it was Wilkins that was meant.

"Oh, the old moss-back, what's-his-name-Wilkins! I sent him up here. Stingy old curmudgeon, hope you downed him for a good big fee. He's rich and now is the time to squeeze him."

"He employed us to prosecute," said Milford.

"Glad of it! I told him to get you and Lawson, more

especially you, for Lawson's no lawyer, he's a financier, a regular Jim Fiske. I told Wilkins that you would raise the very roof off the court-house if he employed you." Here he paused to strike a match, holding a half-burned cigar between his lips. "Of course he'd believe any thing I told him."

"Thank you, you have been very kind," Milford hastened to say.

"Oh, I knew you or anybody 'd do, in a case like that, just as well as Dan Voorhees or Ben Harrison," replied the banker. "It doesn't require a Webster to convict a murderer who don't deny the deed. I knew you needed the fee and could handle that sort of a case well enough."

Milford looked into McGinnis's face to see if the man were really sincere in giving him such a back-handed compliment as the words had implied. Evidently enough the banker considered himself playing the part of a genuine friend to a deserving young man of small ability. He had rather kindly eyes, and no doubt viewed the matter in hand from the point of view of mere dollars and cents.

"I told you I'd be a friend to this firm, the first time I was up here. Business is pretty good, isn't it?" he added, in a light, off-hand tone.

"We are getting on very well, thank you," said Milford, "and I am grateful for your friendship."

"By the way, where's Lawson?" McGinnis in-

quired, as if the thought of asking the question had been accidental.

"He went to Chicago this morning."

"Humph! Did he say what for?"

"No."

The banker beat a low tattoo on the desk with his fingers and hummed a tune. Then:

"When will he be back?" he inquired.

"He didn't say, I think."

"Did he get a telegram?"

"I don't know. He didn't mention it if he did."

"Humph! Well, it's of no importance; I can see him when he returns."

McGinnis smoked awhile in silence, apparently absorbed in thought. Presently he rose and as he walked to the door, said:

"Well, good luck to you in your murder case. You've caught your hare, that's the first command of the recipe, skin him is the next."

He went out humming the tune he had dropped a few minutes before.

Lawson returned late in the evening of the next day and found Milford busy with his law books, briefing the great case. A tumbled heap of supreme court reports lay on the desk, whilst almost every chair and table in the room had a similar incumbrance.

"By Jove! this looks like a law-office! What's stirred you up to this pitch of frenzy, I wonder!" he

exclaimed, lifting his hands and arching his brows. "It surely must mean Wilkins!"

Milford did not have time to answer this rather boisterous greeting before McGinnis came in and hustled Lawson into the consultation-room.

"I've been dead to see you," said the banker, as soon as the door was shut. "I've made a discovery."

"Well, out with it," said Lawson.

"Well, Arnold G. Lewis has got control of the X. L. & V. bonds and has determined to build the road through Bankersville, instead of through Saxtonburg."

"Well?"

"I hit on a scheme yesterday and came at once to see you, but you were gone. It is this: the old grade of the defunct L. J. & P. can be had of Larkin, of Chicago, who holds the old bonds, for a trifling sum, if we can buy them before he discovers Arnold G. Lewis's plan."

"What do you call a trifling sum in that connection?" Lawson inquired.

"Oh, for that matter, most any small amount; but we could make big money by giving him twenty-five thousand."

"Do you think so?"

"I know so. Lewis has gone so far that he can't back out, and he evidently thinks the old grade is abandoned and lying there ready-made to his hand. He'd have to pay any price we might ask."

"That being the case, congratulate me," said Lawson. "I bought the bonds, stock and all the franchises of the defunct L. J. & P. from Larkin this morning for three thousand dollars!"

"You did!"

"I most assuredly did, and have the papers in my traveling bag at this moment."

McGinnis could not quite hide his mingled surprise and chagrin behind the indifferent smile he conjured up into his face.

"Well, you've got a good thing—a small bonanza, if you pull the strings right," he said. "I didn't know you were working at it, however. In fact I thought I was the only person in Bankersville who knew the condition in which things stood with reference to the old grade."

Lawson chuckled heartily, and there was a gleam in his eyes that disturbed the banker, it was so mirthfully soulless and selfish.

"I'm not asleep every time my eyes are shut," the young man said. "I've been waiting for Arnold G. Lewis to walk into the net. He's in now and he'll have to buy that grade."

The "old grade," as it was termed, was a roadway long since abandoned, but once made ready for the cross-ties and iron of a projected railroad. It was finished, so far as the earthwork was concerned, to a distance of fifty miles westward from Bankersville. It

lay exactly in the direction of Lewis's proposed line, and to use it would save him some two hundred thousand dollars on the cost of building his road. Lawson, with that sensitiveness to financial suggestions which always distinguishes the American speculator, saw the main chance from the moment that Arnold G. Lewis's plans began to reach the public attention. It was Miss Crabb who first set him to considering the scheme for getting possession of the franchises and the finished work of the old company. In her unflagging pursuit of the news for her paper she had inquired of Lawson about the probable ability of Arnold G. Lewis to build his road by way of Bankersville instead of by way of Saxtonburg.

"I should think this is quite as good a town as Saxtonburg, to say the least," Lawson had answered; "but the country is not so level, it would cost more to come this way."

"Oh, but you forget, there's the old grade reaching from here clear to the Illinois line, and almost ready for the ties and iron," she rejoined. "That can be utilized, you know."

"That's true, certainly, but;" he hesitated, his mind working with more than lightning celerity, "that really might have a tendency to counteract the heavy work east of here, though I should think it would require a great deal of work to make the old grade ready."

He looked at her so fixedly that her eyes fell and

she actually blushed a little; but in fact he did not see her. He was looking far past her to a possible financial horizon. He left her abruptly and went directly to the records of the county to study the status of the defunct railroad company, with a view to ascertaining where the principal owners of the stock and bonds lived. It did not take him long to find out that one, Larkin, of Chicago, held a mortgage and judgment which controlled every thing. With this knowledge safely housed in his mind, he kept still and bided his time until Arnold G. Lewis, the great railroad man, had gone so far with building the X. L. & V. in the direction of Bankersville that he could not change the route; then he went to Chicago and bought Larkin's mortgage and judgment, together with his stock, bonds and all other evidences of ownership or incumbrance.

McGinnis felt that, in some indirect and uncertain way, this brilliant *coup d' argent*, as Miss Crabb was fond of calling such things, had been at his expense and that Lawson had maliciously enjoyed his discomfiture. It must not be taken for granted that all men are selfish enough to entertain McGinnis's view of the matter, but somehow these big lumps of good luck are always just about to fall into so many hands, at the time the successful fellows carry them off, that the unsuccessful ones can not avoid feeling a sense of deep injury. The banker was too much a man of the world to exhibit his chagrin, however.

He praised Lawson's shrewdness and foresight and congratulated him volubly.

Between Lawson and Mr. Arnold G. Lewis the negotiations were short and simple. Lewis could afford to pay a hundred thousand dollars for the "old grade" and the franchises pertaining thereto, and he did, thus permitting Lawson to realize a net profit of about ninety-seven thousand dollars.

Of course the rapidly accumulating fortune of Lawson, attended as its growth was by a series of such exceptionally lucky strokes of chance, gave the young man a most picturesque attitude in the eyes of the public. The newspapers exaggerated his achievements and some editor gave him the name of Lucky Lawson, which was taken up and bandied about by the press in all sorts of flattering paragraphs. No doubt this notoriety stimulated his ambition and gave him that sort of audacious pluck which at times appears to carry a man of his peculiar gifts and temperament forward with a rapid acceleration of force. At all events, he now entered upon a career of successful speculation which, if it was deprecated by many of the best people in Bankersville, gave him an influence that few men acquire so young. Nor did he appear selfish, for he donated ten thousand dollars to help build the new Presbyterian church, and ten thousand to the college to be used to defray the expenses of poor young men studying

for the ministry. Later on, but this is going far ahead of our story, he gave to the city of Bankersville a finely-wooded tract of land for a public park. Such acts are not lost upon a community. A public-spirited man rarely fails to endear himself to the people who feel his liberality, and especially if his gifts are supplemented by a genial personal bearing.

Bankersville felt the impetus given to its trade by the emulation Lawson's example generated. It may have been that the time was ripe for the coming of such a spirit and thus every thing stood ready to help it along. Certainly the tide flowed with Lawson, and it appeared to bear the whole of Bankersville forward with it, until at length the Bucket-shop came.

VIII.

MILFORD pursued his study of the evidence and authorities bearing upon the murder case, with alternate periods of enthusiasm and of depression. He felt that much was expected of him, for, owing to the generous paragraphs of Miss Crabb, and to Lawson's quite as generous talk on the street, it had gone forth that he was preparing to make a brilliant and thorough prosecution of the young murderer; and yet he was indirectly conscious, so to speak, of an under-current of adverse feeling setting against him. The jealousy of a few lawyers who imagined that he had thrown himself in the way of their careers, showed itself in various annoying ways, chiefly by means of anonymous communications to an unscrupulous journal reflecting on his past life, having especial reference to his connection with the confederate army. The following paragraph, copied from the Bankersville *Snarler*, is a fair instance:

"It would seem very fitting that the foulest murderer who ever disgraced our jail should be defended by the only lawyer at our bar who ever lifted his hand against the flag of our country."

Once in a while these nagging paragraphs took the so-called humorous form. Here are some samples:

"We presume that Colonel Milford (all Southerners are colonels, we believe) will close his oration in the Wilkins murder case with the genuine old-fashioned rebel yell."

"Our solitary relic of 'chivalry and honahsah' will wave the ensanguined garment over the jury next week. The prisoner is forewarned that he is foredoomed."

Some watchful and patient enemy invariably mailed him a carefully-marked copy of each paper containing any thing of this character, and although he never gave any public notice to the vulgar and malicious things, he could not get rid of a keen sensitiveness to their poison.

Milford had written within the past year several pieces of verse for the magazines, but under cover of a *nom de plume*. His lynx-eyed torturers discovered this, as a much-copied paragraph showed:

"We suggest," it ran, "that Colonel Milford, ex-rebel, if he wants to make sure of the prisoner's utter collapse, quote some of his love-poetry to the court and jury in the coming murder trial. The colonel's poetry is warranted to be sugar-coated death to all sensible people. Next week we shall give our readers one or two of his spooniest and mooniest effusions."

The reader will understand that this sort of doings was not indulged in by the representative journals of

Bankersville, whose editors were gentlemen; still it had its sting all the more worrying because coming from a source utterly irresponsible and therefore unassailable.

During this season of mingled hope and doubt, when ambition to succeed and disgust with his profession were alternately uppermost in his heart, Milford found Miss Wilton always ready to encourage him and incite him to what she termed the heroic treatment of the case. She often startled him with the force and originality of her suggestions in this regard, but oftener with the calm severity of her words.

"He has robbed a mother of her son, and a young, sweet girl of her lover," she said, "and I think he deserves no mercy. I should not hesitate to urge his conviction on the highest possible grounds."

She frequently referred with something akin to bitterness, to the outrageous assumption implied by the murder, as she viewed it, the assumption on the murderer's part that the girl was not to be considered at all in the case where two men fall in love with her. "She's mine," says he, although she has refused him and chosen the other, and he kills the lover for having dared to take his own.

"I see in such an instance," she remarked, "one of the dregs of barbarity, a fragment left over from the days when women were the property, the slaves of men. It speaks of but a feeble progress, a slight advance from medieval times. Here are two men: they find a

pretty girl, one succeeds in getting her, then they scramble over possession of her, just as two robbers would wrangle over an ill-gotten treasure. What right has a man to assume that he has any ownership in a woman? what right has he to presume to fight about her? She has the sole proprietary right to herself, and no man has any concern in the matter until she gives it to him. I despise the way Blackstone discusses the rights of women, that is, in the main. He scarcely winces, for instance, when he announces that possibly the law would uphold a man in moderate chastisement of his wife at need. The whole groundwork of the law as regards women is rotten. It is this rottenness of the substance of law that has educated men up to the point of killing each other on a woman's account."

Milford, looking at the question from a man's as well as from a lawyer's point of view, was unable to observe any strict relevancy in such an argument, but he did catch from it the effect of a fine womanly feeling, which often serves admirably in the place of logic. Moreover, she made him aware, in a larger degree at each interview, how charmingly sincere she was and with what unlimited honesty she was going forward with her purpose in life. It was not unnatural, perhaps, that Milford should be reminded forcibly, in this connection, of the narrow escape that he and Lawson had had from an encounter which might have ended as disastrously as the one that had given birth to the

Wilkins murder. What would Marian Wilton think or do if that strange quarrel should come to her knowledge? It startled him to recognize what a weighty question this was to him. Then he asked himself what would be the end of this interest in her which had already grown to be the largest value of his life.

"If you make a fine, strong, eloquent speech," she said to him one day, "and gain your great cause, you will have won your fame. Then fortune will follow; I fairly envy you your golden opportunity. You will be master of it, I know."

They were in the bay-window, as usual, looking out over the Wabash valley, now heavily covered with snow. She was in fine spirits, her face showing the rich glow of health and enthusiasm. On this subject she was always enthusiastic.

"I don't know, I can't forecast what I shall be able to do," he responded, "I feel so differently about it at different times. Really, I think I am out of my place as a lawyer; there is something in the profession that galls me strangely."

"Don't say that," she exclaimed; her voice was pitched almost to a command; "you are unjust to yourself and to your noble calling. I want you to gather up your every force and show what you can do in this case; your friends expect it of you. A great deal is being said."

"Yes, I know a great deal is being said," he replied,

“and it sometimes seems to me that it is very strange that people will not allow me the privilege of attending to my own affairs in my own way without their suggestions.” Then, feeling that she might construe his words into an ungenerous rebuke of her own interest, he quickly added: “You can not know how I prize your kind words, however, and how much I wish to deserve your respect and your encouragement.”

“But what people say and think must be a great deal to you,” she said, with a directness of manner that seemed to ignore his last phrases; “a lawyer lives by what the people think and say of him. Now is your grand chance to make them think and say things of incalculable value, and you must be equal to the occasion.”

He looked at her fine, energetic face and wondered if she did not understand as perfectly as he did himself how at times he looked upon this thing of prosecuting a fellow-being to his death as a piece of vulgar barbarism revolting to every sense of a higher manhood.

“Do you ever consider the situation of a lawyer who, for hire, hounds a human being to the gallows as hunters hound a fox?” He put the question with a bluntness that seemed to him, after he had spoken, almost cruel.

“Your comparison is not a happy one,” she calmly rejoined; “as righteous men pursue and kill deadly reptiles would sound better.” How do you propose to

protect society? Is the criminal to be the object of fine sympathy, while the outraged victims of his malice go uncared for? The wages of sin is death."

She sat for a moment in silence, and then, as if not satisfied with what she had said, added in a slightly altered tone: "Of course a lawyer is never called upon to do any more than his duty. He must never stoop to color facts or to cunningly distort the law."

Somehow he wished that she did not feel what she said. Not that he could have pointed out any sophistry in her thought, but her words seemed to convey a suggestion of an acquired and unnatural attitude of her mind.

"I am afraid your qualifications and limitations would sadly demolish forensic oratory," he said in a lighter manner. "There is usually a great deal of coloring and distorting in the standard forensic speeches."

"But you must not do that," she exclaimed, almost with vehemence; "you must set a worthy pattern. You see I expect great things of you," she added with a cordial smile.

"Come to the piano and sing me something," he said, with the air of one who quits a hateful subject. "It is a long while since I heard you last." In fact it had been just four days.

"Let me read instead of sing," she remarked, taking up a small book from a little table close at hand. "It will vary the monotony."

"That will do," he said, "so that it is something restful. I believe I am tired. I have been working very hard."

She read Keats's Ode to a Nightingale with charming effect, so he thought, adding the sweetness of her voice to the rich color and tender melancholy of the incomparable poem.

Once in awhile in one's life a very small thing, even so small a thing as hearing a young woman read a poem, has the power to stir one's heart strangely. Miss Wilton's voice, as it ran over the swells and cadences of the charming word-music, filled him with a delicate and tender sense of a far-reaching pleasure. As he looked at her a Virgilian verse came into his mind:

Varium et mutabile semper femina.

She seemed just the opposite of what she had been a few minutes before. Then she had appeared ambitious, almost austere; now she looked the very warm embodiment of womanly sweetness.

Somehow the lines:

"O, for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim
And purple-stained mouth,"

kept repeating themselves in his mind after she had finished. He quoted them aloud and added:

"I would rather be the author of such a poem as that than to be all the world's best lawyers embodied in one."

"But what good would it do you? This is not the dreamer's age. You would make no fame; you would die poor and obscure at the end of a wasted life." She assumed almost a severe tone and made certain slight half-impatient gestures as she spoke. "Every life must take its color and force from its environment," she went on, "and there's no poetry in to-day's surroundings. Go in for a practical life and aim at something solid, something the age demands, for that way lies success, and success is the meed of all."

There was nothing didactic or "preachy" in her manner. Whilst she was greatly in earnest, she did not grow eloquent; it was as if she were enunciating the result of a careful study.

"Arthur Selby has reached success," said Milford; "his is a pleasanter life than a lawyer's. The people he distresses or kills are imaginary ones. I would rather be a novelist than a lawyer."

"Mr. Selby did not impress me much; he is a very light man in every way, I should judge," she replied in a reflective way. "Literature must be no field for heroes if he can stand among the champions. I never met a more commonplace little person."

Milford laughed as he instantaneously compared her frank reflections with some of his own on the same subject.

"It is more what a man achieves than what he is, after all," he suggested evasively, "as regards success."

"Yes, but I got an impression from Mr. Selby that artists and poets and novelists are mostly little fellows who couldn't succeed in any strong practical way. I shouldn't like to appear a pigmy beside the people I had invented."

"You are hard on Selby," said Milford; "he seems to have broken and dispersed all your——"

"No," she hurriedly remarked, "he simply disclosed the fact that the literary field must, at the best, have a very light soil for such men as he to plow the deepest furrows. I do not mean any unkind reference to Mr. Selby personally. Light men are often the best, but they can not excel in a really heavy profession, where genuine leadership and personal mastery are the test."

"Sing me a song, or read me another poem," exclaimed Milford; "I feel very weak and light and fear that I am no born chieftain—no hero—but just a plain, old-fashioned, conscientious man."

"You are an exclusive and a sentimentalist," she responded, taking up his half-bantering manner, as she reopened the volume of Keats. "You will droop and languish in our crisp frosty air. You have too many 'Way down upon the Suwanee River' moods, I fear."

She read two or three sonnets, and afterward, when he was taking leave of her, she said:

"Promise me before you go that you will make a great speech in the murder case."

"I will do my best," he answered. He very much

desired to say a great deal more, for, in response to a hint of something quite insistent and earnest in her voice, his heart leaped and his whole being was thrilled with love. But he forebore. He was too poor to think of it, and then her ideal was not like him.

"If you really do your best, that is all I ask," she rejoined. "I am going to the court-room to hear you."

"Then, indeed, I will put forth all the power I have," he said, "for I can not bear to fail in your presence." There was a depth of meaning in his voice, which the words failed to convey.

"You will not fail if you try hard," she exclaimed with a bright smile, and he went away full of a strange sense of satisfaction.

IX.

MILFORD continued to board with Mrs. O'Slaughtery, and it pleased him to note a mutual fondness growing between that volatile landlady and Mr. Downs, the now thriving auctioneer.

"He's a good Catholic, Misther Downs is," she one day said to Milford, "and I niver found it out till a little toime ago, the sly boy!"

"Sly *old* boy, you mean, my dear Mrs. O'Slaughtery," said Milford.

"Owld! old! (correcting her pronunciation) who's old? Not Misther Downs to be sure!"

"He told me that he had been an auctioneer for twenty-eight years. He must have begun young."

"Oh, Misther Milford! how you can fib! Misther Downs is jist a bit past thirty-foive." She turned aside her head and held up her hands.

"You seem to have some interest, some motive—" Milford began.

"There now! There you go again!" she cried. "It's slander me boarders or misripresint me, you do ivry toime. You're getting a bad disposition intirely."

"You are mistaken," said Milford, in a dry, matter-

of-fact tone; "I like Mr. Downs, he's a very nice old man."

"Away wid ye!" she exclaimed, forgetting to repress the Irish, "away wid ye! Ye think ye's smart, ye do, but I don't moind the loikes." She blushed in a charmingly impetuous way and leaned over Milford, who was taking a late luncheon, until her rosy lips were close to his ear. "We shan't keep any boarders afther we're married, so we shan't. That's what *he* says!"

"So I must begin to look for a new place, eh?"

"Niver ye moind, I'll give ye due notice," she said with a very joyous laugh; then in a serious tone she added: "A person has to consider sich a thing as that. It won't do for a woman in my situation to jump right off into the foire, as ye moight say."

"Never fear, Mrs. O'Slaughtery, Mr. Downs is a good man, and if you love him—"

"Love him! Oh, you sloy boy!" and she rubbed her face with her palms as if to wipe away the scarlet blushes.

"Well, we won't quarrel about Downs at all events," Milford remarked, as he got up from the table. "I wish you both a long and happy married life." Remotely, despite a prompt protest in his heart, he was conscious of some connection between what he was saying to Mrs. O'Slaughtery and his own vision of love and happiness. A happy married life! The phrase

projected such a picture! A home, a fire-side, cozy surroundings, and Marian Wilton. A young man has the right to look into the future and contemplate a sketch like that.

He went back toward his office with one of those feverish impulses, which lately had been rather frequent, urging him to redoubled effort in preparing for the great criminal trial. In some way Marian Wilton had become a part of the affair in so far as his hourly increasing interest and anxiety were concerned. It was as if he were making the effort for her, instead of for his client; for love, instead of for justice.

It was about this time that one of the newspapers began to publish garbled and distorted stanzas from some of Milford's poems, together with ludicrous so-called explanatory notes in which the editor said some very witty, as well as very insulting things, to which Milford never deigned to pay the slightest attention.

As he walked toward his office after leaving Mrs. O'Slaughtery's, he became aware of an unusual stir in the street. A considerable crowd of men and boys had come together, and were eagerly discussing some exciting subject. Here and there were smaller knots of persons evidently absorbed in the same question. Downs was the first man Milford reached.

"Hullo!" exclaimed the auctioneer with mingled excitement and admiration in his voice, "your partner is a whole team, hain't he? He's a rattler!"

"What is it?" inquired Milford.

"What! don't you know? Didn't you see it? Did you miss the fun?"

"No; what do you mean, what has happened?"

"Why, Lawson jest swiped the very earth with Dilkins, awhile ago; didn't you know that? Well, that's what's the matter!"

"Dilkins the editor?"

"Yes, Dilkins the editor, and he jest more'n knocked 'im out'n time. You jest ought to 'a' been here. It was wus 'an a Barnum circus!"

Just then the crowd over on the other corner parted, and Dilkins, led by two men, came out, disheveled, bleeding, his face bruised and swollen and his coat sadly torn and dirty. It was easy to see that he had fared badly.

"Look!" exclaimed Downs. "Both his eyes knocked into one, and his nose spread out all over his countenance! Mr. Lawson knocked 'im down three times jest as fast as he could git up. Jerusalem! but them licks sounded loud!"

A moment later, Lawson came out of the crowd attended by the city marshal. He was smiling and gesticulating.

"Oh, for that matter, I can thrash every editor in town without stopping to rest," he was saying, "and I'm going to do it, if this nagging at my partner, Mr. Milford, isn't stopped. He's a quiet, inoffensive gen-

tleman, and won't resent any thing, but *I'll* do his fighting for him and do it in good style, too, whip an editor every day in the year. What do I care for a little fine?"

"You gave him a good one," said the marshal, jocosely, strutting along at Lawson's side, the picture of an official, conscious of his importance for the moment. It was not every day that he could arrest one of the upper ten of Bankersville. He fancied that he was showing the mob that he was no respecter of persons.

Milford followed the stream of men now flowing into the mayor's office. Lawson pleaded guilty to an assault and battery, and was formally fined. He handed the money to the mayor, and, with his eyes half turned upon some newspaper men who had pushed to the front, said :

"Your honor has done right ; but I give notice now that from this on, until my money is exhausted in fines, I purpose to thrash every editor and every reporter who speaks insultingly of me or my partner without just cause." As he finished speaking, his eyes met those of Miss Crabb, who, under the excitement of the occasion, had come into the room in search of the news. She was already shrinking back and trying to get out. Lawson went to her at once and made way for her exit.

"Of course, I didn't include you in my list just

now," he laughingly half-whispered, "but I mean to do just what I said. I'm going to stop this infernal worrying at Milford, or be found trying. The idea of such a cowardly little fox-eared country editor as Dilkins calling a gentleman like Milford a 'rhyming rowdy from rebeldom,' is more than I shall bear after this."

Milford sought the seclusion of his office, bearing with him a sense of humiliation. A good many remarks reached his ears in the street. Every body seemed to take Lawson's part, and sustain him fully in what he had done to Dilkins.

"It's just as Lawson says," a burly citizen had exclaimed; "Mr. Milford is a quiet, nice, good man who don't harm nobody. He's as nice an' quiet as any woman. Why don't these editors let him alone? Guess they'll be mighty apt to go slow after this; they've got Lawson up on his ear now, and he's one of the boys! He's on his muscle."

Lawson came in after awhile. He was calm and smiling as usual, and appeared to have got through the encounter without a scratch or a bruise.

"I want to beg your pardon, Milford," he exclaimed, "but I couldn't bear it any longer."

"It was wrong, rashly wrong," said Milford; "you had no right to assume a protecting attitude. I can take excellent care of myself."

"Oh, come now, I know you couldn't, situated as you are, turn your hand. You're brave and all that,

but you know that if you go to fighting you'll take a pistol and a bowie-knife, and that sort of thing won't do up here. No, it's best just as it is. Let me do the fighting! I've got the muscle and money, and I rather like the exercise. It's wholesome."

"If you will fight in your own name, and on account of your own affairs, it will be nothing to me," said Milford; "but I do not choose to have you assume to be my champion."

Lawson laughed. Then, in a very cordial tone, he said :

"Oh, I don't assume that. I told McGinnis awhile ago that if they once got you started you'd wake up the whole town. But, in fact, you can't afford it. You are from the South, and are hampered and handicapped by your rebel record, you know."

Milford turned quite pale, but said nothing. Lawson continued :

"It's a great thing for you. Every body is on your side now, and, Milford, if you make a strong speech in that murder case, your rise is certain. You just keep cool and push right on." There was the ring of good-fellowship in his voice, which effectually repelled any suspicion of a patronizing purpose in what he said. Milford could not be angry with him, and yet the whole atmosphere of the present state of things was almost unbearable. A man can submit to almost any ordeal with more grace than to the knowledge that

there is a public doubt as to his ability to fight his own battles.

"I don't want you to weaken on the prosecution at any point," Lawson added, "for your measure will be taken by the speech you make."

"Well, who has said that there is any prospect of any weakening on my part?" Milford exclaimed; "why do you and others keep intimating that I am going to betray my client and debase myself by shirking my duty? I should like an end to this stuff."

"Pshaw, Milford, you do me wrong. I have not intimated what you say. I am so earnestly desirous of your high success that I may have said something foolish. Forgive me. I am not going to let you think evil of me."

The young men gazed at each other a moment and then shook hands in token of a better understanding, laughing a little meanwhile.

Next morning the newspapers were literally full of what they called the Lawson-Dilkins affair. In a general way the editorial comments were favorable to Lawson, but the editor of the *News* affected to see in the outcome of the encounter a blow given to the freedom of the press, and he ended a scathing paragraph as follows:

"The editor of this journal does not care to be counted among fighters, but he ventures the casual

remark that Mr. Lawson's attack upon Mr. Dilkins was brutal and cowardly. If Mr. Lawson doesn't relish what we here say, we have a seven-shooter which positively denies Mr. Lawson's ability to do to us what he did to Dilkins. The *News* defies Mr. Lawson."

No sooner did Lawson see the paragraph than he forthwith went to the *News* office. The editor had his pistol handy and showed great pluck, but he was excited and fired wide of his aim. Lawson wrenched the weapon out of his hand, seized him by the throat and proceeded to beat him soundly.

"Your seven-shooter didn't say the truth," he exclaimed, as he dashed the limp editor into a corner of the room.

He met Miss Crabb on the stairway, as he went down. She looked at him in utter amazement. She had heard the pistol-shot.

"I have kept my word," he said, touching his hat and passing on down into the street. His face was very red.

Of course this second exploit caused still greater excitement, but it put an end to the insulting paragraphs. The proprietors of the *News* discharged the editor rather than have him attempt to continue the course he had begun. The popular tide was too strong in Lawson's favor. What his money could not have done, his reckless personal courage had accomplished.

One good result of all this was the promotion of Miss Crabb to the editor's chair in the *News* office. She merited the distinction, such as it was, and her influence was good for the journal in many ways. She possessed the rare faculty of being able to separate the news of the hour from the mere worthless and harmful gossip which is continually poured into the office of a country newspaper. Not that she was entirely free from the tyranny of petty personal motives, but she tempered even her shortcomings in that direction with a reserve that was in her favor. She had literary aspirations and took occasion to fill a column of the *News*, now and then, with sprightly notices of new books and comments on the current issues of the magazines. Perhaps she at times indulged the hope that some of her well-chosen words of praise might return to her one of these days, like bread cast upon the water, when her novel should at last appear from one of the great Eastern publishing-houses. She certainly believed that literary kissing was to a large degree a matter of favor, for on what other theory could she explain the persistent regularity with which her manuscripts came back to her from the magazines wherein, just as regularly, appeared the contributions of a certain Miss Luckey, of Ohio? She felt quite sure that Miss Luckey, although a good writer, possessed no advantage over her other than that of some chance friendship with those who could help her. It was

natural enough for Miss Crabb to note with a little thrill of delight the announcement that Mr. Arthur Selby had been made editor of a great magazine published at New York. The thought of sending him a story came up at once. She had been nursing the MS. for a good while.

“MY DEAR MR. SELBY:” she wrote,

“I have just noticed that you have taken editorial charge of the —— magazine. I hope you have not forgotten me ; but, whether you have or not, here is a story which I do hope you will find acceptable. Our town has grown a great deal since you were here, but it remembers your visit with pleasure.

“Very truly yours etc., SARAH ANNA CRABB.”

She affixed her signature to this note and sealed it up with the MS., feeling a little fluttering at heart. Would he open the great door of a literary life to her? How easy it would be for him to do it! She was sure that if she had charge of a powerful magazine it would delight her to give a struggling genius the chance to live and grow. Suddenly she tore off the envelope; how near she had come to ruining her opportunity! She hastily examined the top of the first page of the MS. Sure enough, there, on the margin, were the cabalistic pencil-marks of the last editor who had declined it. She took an eraser and carefully rubbed off the figures and letters. This did not satisfy her, however, for there was the evidence of

the erasure. She wrote a new initial page, only to discover that this fresh sheet showed, plainer than ever, the trick she was trying to play. So she wrote the MS. all over again, from beginning to end. This done, she posted the package with a beating heart.

WHEN the circuit court was in session and the day set for the much-talked-of trial had arrived, a large concourse of people was disappointed; the cause was continued by the defendant on account of an absent witness. This delay carried the trial forward to the spring term.

Milford felt a sudden waft of relief pass over his brain, like a soothing breath. The fair, troubled, boyish face of young Hempstead, the prisoner, had affected him deeply, as it shone, half-frightened, half-bewildered among the careless countenances of the encircling lawyers. It may have been that the presence of a criminal advocate of almost world-wide fame, a man of giant frame and leonine face, added something to Milford's dread. Not that he was a timid man, but he felt that all the advantage of personal prestige and of popular expectation lay with the famous lawyer; whilst he, all untried and undeveloped, had nothing in his favor beyond the cold, cruel demands of legal justice.

Young Hempstead, the murderer, was small of stature, with deep-set eyes and a waxen face, jet-black hair and uneven teeth; but his expression was not

wicked, much less cruel. The close observer would note in the thick lips and broad chin the key to the boy's character—where passionate impulses ruled in the place of moral force—a character not dangerous to others, as a rule, but prone to feeding upon its own vitals, so to speak; a sensuous nature devoid of self-poise and without any understanding of moral responsibility in its widest meaning; one of a large class of criminals, indeed, who are supremely selfish, rather than hopelessly depraved, and whose crimes have their source in uncontrollable passions. His case was an instance of the debatable sort where the question of hereditary weakness, or obscure nervous disease, or still more remote psychal lesion, may arise in the ultra-humane mind of the investigator. Few, indeed, are the lawyers of extensive practice who have not, over and over again, dissected, all in vain, problems of this sort. The irresistible trend of certain characters toward crime, how shall we make it consist with responsibility? Shall we hang a human being by the neck until he die because his nerve-centers have become incurably diseased, or because some hereditary seed of crime ripen in his soul? Probe as we may, we shall never be able to find the secret roots of insanity, or the original fountain of transgression, nor shall we ever purify life by the processes of the criminal law; and yet we must remain inexorable, for fear that any relaxation of punishment may tend to develop

myriads of incipient, hitherto retarded, cancers of the soul.

The spring drew on, opening unusually early, with a dash of green on the buck-eye trees and a pinkish snow of claytonias on the warm southward slopes of the woods. May had scarcely come when a real breath of summer swept over the broad, beautiful valley of the Wabash. Bankersville responded to the fervor of the weather with all the vim and enthusiasm of a true Western town. The maple trees that shaded the streets were not more gayly clothed than were the prosperous people who strolled in the avenues, or rode, or drove, along the well-kept streets and bloom-scented suburban lanes. Everywhere was color; it was as if the new school in art had exemplified its theory in the purity, the brilliancy, and the variety of color, effects noticeable any afternoon on the broad, fashionable boulevard where the mothers, nurse-girls, misses and young ladies of Bankersville seemed fairly to float in the ravishing air, like a cloud of wavering butterflies.

Say what may be said in all truth from the point of view of the most jaundiced observer, and yet the fact remains that the typical Western town is full of thrift and energy and is haunted by happy people. If some itinerant philosopher there be wandering the world over in search of a truly charming instance of happiness in the home life, let him go visit a Western town. There he may turn from any broad, clean street and

pass through the first newly-painted gate into an earthly Eden, where love is alive and healthy, and where the kisses of pure lips have made the air good to breathe. Nor is culture, of a free-hand, liberal, sketchy sort, wanting. There are books and magazines and art-journals, along with blushing bits of embroidery and some pleasing touches of decorative arrangement in hangings and furniture. The piano here, the organ there, a guitar, perhaps, often a violin, sometimes a banjo, assert a musical taste quite advanced and general. True, the Western town is not conventional, its accent is rather broad and raw to the ears of over-nice people, but it has viviality in its character and sincerity of purpose in all it says and does; from all of which it results that a Western town is open to the operations of the swindler and the adventurer. The desire to get on in the world, make money, amass property, was as active and general in Bankersville as ever it was in any town, and side by side with this desire ran a swift current of progress in all manner of extravagances which may be called polite. The women knew how to dress, the men knew how to use fine horses and showy equipages to the best effect, and how to build beautiful houses. Bankersville had a strong bicycle club, a famous base-ball nine, some very fast horses and a much patronized skating rink, to say nothing of the bucket-shop, that peculiar outlier of the Chicago speculating machine.

This spring Bankerville was, to use the phrase of a real-estate agent, "on a general boom," and, in many ways, Lawson was the exciting cause of the great furor for out-lots just now so prevalent. He was platting addition after addition to the town (city, with a big C, the Bankersville people preferred to say), and the prices of lots were increasing in a way to captivate the public. In a word, every body was speculating, more or less, either in out-lots or through the bucket-shop or directly in Chicago. Somehow Lawson was the spirit and core of it all; his schemes were almost numberless, and no one besides himself knew how far they reached. One thing the whole public knew of, however, his great liberality to churches, schools and charities. He was extremely popular, though, as a matter of course, he had made some pronounced enemies. Milford, notwithstanding a steadily growing law practice and the load imposed upon him by the pending murder case, had been drawn, by an irresistible fascination, into literature deeper and deeper. He had even gone so far as to begin publishing poems and stories over his own name in one of the Eastern monthly magazines, and it is but fair to add that he had attracted the most favorable attention of the critics. Not that he was in the way of becoming famous, for, account for it as we may, the provincial writer usually reaches success by the longest route. He is regarded by the clubs and coteries of the great literary centers as a sort of free-

lance riding uninvited into the lists of authorship, and against his queer-fitting armor and outlandish trappings are hurled the arrows, javelins and catapult-missiles of all the wits who chance to observe him. He feels that, in a degree, he is an Ishmaelite, and is quite too ready to fight all comers. Herein, perhaps, lies the secret of your provincial's solemn, humorless earnestness of effort, his tendency to view his calling as the whole of life, and his inability to compass the lighter details of art.

Miss Crabb, observing Milford's apparent literary progress, often came to him for a species of comfort very dear to the literary aspirant—sympathy. She brought him Arthur Selby's answer to her note that had accompanied her MS. story. She was very confiding.

"Read it, please," she said with a slight frown of perplexity. "I can't just gather what he means. He returns my story, but, at the same time, seems to wish to publish it. What do you make of it?"

Milford read as follows:

NEW YORK——

"MY DEAR MISS CRABB:

"My thanks are due you for allowing me to see your story, and I must apologize for the delay. So many good things are sent us, and we have room for so few, that I am perplexed all the time. I wish I could use every good story I get, and especially

those sent me by my friends. Your story has many good points and *your women are not in the least insipid*. Pray remember me to Dr. Wilton's household.

“Faithfully yours,

“ARTHUR SELBY.”

“What a good memory he must have,” she said, as Milford looked up from finishing the note. “That last sentence refers to a thing I told him when he was here. Do you suppose he refused my story because I criticised the women of his novels?”

“The ways of an editor are past finding out,” Milford responded. “It would be useless to try to get at Mr. Selby's feelings through his letter.”

“It's a very cordial note, I think, don't you?” she ventured. “It is full of sympathy.”

Milford looked at her and could not have the heart to put a damper on her hope. She was evidently encouraged by the tone of the editor's communication.

“It is a wonder he wrote at all,” he said, deceitfully, avoiding her inquiry. “Most editors have a way of using printed slips, you know.”

“Indeed I do know,” she laughingly replied. “Those hateful printed forms are photographed on my memory forever.”

“I have seen them,” Milford rejoined, dryly. “They are poor consolers.”

Miss Crabb went away puzzled, but in good spirits,

feeling that she was just a little nearer the goal of her literary aspirations; for, of all the world, an unsophisticated literary person is the most defenseless against insidious deceits practiced by the average moral diplomat. If Keats really did not die of a critic's stab, the danger still remains that a strong dose of fraudulent praise may kill the usefulness of a good scribe who has ventured to try a literary flight. Something pathetic, and yet not too pathetic for a touch of humor, runs through this provincial *cacoethes scribendi* which is found in some stage affecting the social atmosphere of almost every town in the West. If the country can get safely through the incipient stages, the most dangerous part of the malady, something really excellent may come of all this provincial literary travail. Be this as it may, no history of social life in a Western town is at all complete with the element of literary ambition left out. The inglorious Miltons and Sapphos of Kokomo and Kalamazoo are by no means mute, and their undying desire is to not remain always inglorious.

An artistic temperament has never been accounted the best for a successful man of affairs, notwithstanding that a great many writers within the last half-century have been *auteurs d'argent*. Setting up a literary shop, wherein the author sits and dictates to the stenographer and to the girl who fingers the typewriter, is now quite an easy thing to the popular nov-

elist; but your novelist has come to be *sui generis*, and he is no longer an artist in the best sense of the word. Art is not compassed by machinery. A soul can not be photographed. But the statement may be diluted so as to include the merely literary temperament, and still the assertion will hold good; for the literary man is not the man, as a rule, to be successful in business affairs. The world has sealed this truth, and the provincial author is made to feel that the autorial life is one of questionable propriety for a man. The country town looks upon its poet as upon a good but rather disreputable joke; it is proud of him, in a certain way, just as it is proud of its five-legged calf, because he is often mentioned in the newspapers, but it is obscurely ashamed of him as well, believing him to be a sort of fun-bundle for the rest of the world. It expects a shiftless career of him, and smiles askance whenever he puts on a new coat. So deep-seated and pervading is the popular prejudice in this connection that nothing, not even moral obliquity, can hinder a professional man, a lawyer, for instance, more than to have it known that he has dipped his office-pen in literary ink. Milford understood this, but he went on, taking a willful pleasure in thus tampering with the current of his fortune. He could not feel sure of his literary gift, nor was he able to quite justify himself in his lukewarm treatment of his legal vocation, and yet he found himself getting more and more under the

spell of a rather vague literary ambition. It appeared so much better suited to his tastes to be able to make his effects by silent and gentle means, than to have to depend upon a species of physical superiority to which no genuine gentleman will appeal save in cases of the highest and most urgent need. Perhaps, after all, an enlightened conscience is the generator of art, and it may be that such a conscience recoils from the shock of certain business methods usually deemed fair and just; hence the world, which cares not much for conscience of any sort, may look upon the artistic temperament as effeminate and nerveless, as proof positive, in other words, of the absence of virility, and the world may be right.

Milford was all the time over-conscious that the public mind was sensitive to the great difference between his measure of success and that of his partner, and he could not fail to see that this difference precisely indicated the ratio of his public influence to that of Lawson. He knew how largely, how almost wholly, Lawson's rise had been a matter of mere luck; still the man himself had, Milford was aware, added a strange force and picturesqueness to each turn of fortune's wheel, so that his victories had not lacked the subtle influence, the elusive fascination of the strokes of audacious genius.

"I have never asked you to join me in any of my ventures, Milford," Lawson said one day—it was about

the time that the real-estate furor was at its height—"and the reason has been that you have seemed to look upon speculation as immoral. You might have made just as much money as I have, if you had been willing to take the risks I have taken."

While Lawson was speaking, his huge watch-seal, his showy rings, and his splendid diamond pin attracted Milford's attention for the first time, and then he went on to note how stout Lawson had grown, and how thick his neck was. It was easy enough now to see that Lawson, although still smooth-shaven, was no longer boyish in appearance; there was something heavy and cold behind the genial surface of his countenance.

"I am quite satisfied," said Milford; "I'm doing well enough."

"Oh, certainly you are; you are doing well, considering the draw-back under which you labor; but I have thought that your true field is literature and that if you had money, which means leisure, you might give full rein to your ambition in that direction." Lawson spoke in a matter-of-fact way, but his voice had a ring of cordial friendship that touched Milford. "Now, in all frankness," he continued, "am I not quite right?"

"No doubt you generalize well," said Milford, "but it is too much to assume that what one man has done another may do. The circumstances of no two persons are identical or mathematically equivalent, even;

and, besides, I am not endowed with a genius for—" he was about to say gambling, but substituted: "guessing lucky numbers."

Lawson laughed, rightly interpreting Milford's meaning, but dashed at once boldly at his purpose.

"Well, there's a sure thing in lard now in Chicago, and I suggest to you that a small deal will make you big money."

"I can not do it," responded Milford, with the emphasis of one who spurns a temptation.

"Let me do it for you, then," urged Lawson, rising as if to go. "It's a dead sure thing. A thousand dollars will make you twenty thousand, if closely followed up, inside of fifteen days."

"No," answered Milford; "I thank you, but I will not do it."

Lawson stood for a minute in silence, then, with another laugh, exclaimed:

"Well, lend me all the money you have for a few days; I can use it to good effect in my own behalf."

Milford looked up from the book before him and with genuine inquiry demanded:

"Do you really wish it? Are you in earnest?"

"Yes, most assuredly. I can't bear to see capital lying idle." Lawson laughed again as he said this, then added in a tone of business: "Why, I could use a million dollars to-day. I could double the money in three days."

Milford took his bank-book from a drawer of his desk, and, after a glance at his balance, wrote a check for fifteen hundred dollars, which represented nearly the whole of his savings.

Lawson pocketed the paper, with a peculiar smile, and went out of the office.

It is but fair to state that Milford did not chance to consider that Lawson was going to use this money in gambling on the price of lard in Chicago. He viewed the loan in the light of a friendly bit of accommodation ; but after Lawson was gone, the thought arose in Milford's mind : " What if Lawson is on the verge of financial ruin ! What if he is clutching at such a straw of salvation as this small sum offers ! " Then he felt a flush of shame come up in his face as he found his reflections taking a narrow, selfish turn. Let the money go, he could live without it ! Did he not owe every thing to Lawson ?

XI.

MCGINNIS and Lawson had continued to stand together in financial affairs ; and by degrees Lawson had managed to get a large interest in the bank of which McGinnis was the chief spirit. The name banker has, of itself, a great value in a Western town : it suggests a wealth quite different from any other, and associates itself with the thought of social solidity and limitless financial responsibility. So that when Lawson got to be a banker he had gained the right to be regarded with complacent confidence by the larger part of the Bankersville people. True, there were those among the staid conservatives who shook their heads and furtively predicted his downfall ; but his following included nearly all the wide-awake, ambitious, pushing business men of the town. Milford, on the other hand, though he had in many ways disclosed sterling qualities as a citizen and excellent abilities as a lawyer, attracted little notice and was allowed to go along as best he could. Miss Crabb copied in the *News* all his contributions to the magazines, with favorable editorial notices of them ; but this was a positive hurt to him. Often he was at the point of asking her to quit this friendly turn, but he could not do it ; she

seemed to regard it as such a pleasant duty, that to deny it to her he felt would be almost brutal.

"If I was you, Mr. Milford, I'll be dern if I'd write any more of them little pomes," said a kind-hearted and observant farmer-friend to him one day in the office.

Lawson was present and laughed uproariously.

"Well, you may laugh," added the speaker, "but I mean it. 'Course the pomes is all right 'nough, but the folks in these parts don't take up with the idee of a grown man a-foolin' away his time at sech doin's. Mr. Milford ort to go to Congress in this deestric', an' he c'u'd go ef he'd quit poetry an' git right down to business. Fac', shore' you live, he c'u'd do it like a dern." As he finished speaking, the farmer bit off a quid from a plug of black tobacco in a manner which emphasized his earnestness.

"I should redouble my efforts in the poetical field," said Milford, very kindly, "if I thought it would ward off any danger of my getting into politics."

"Gittin' into politics," echoed the farmer, a petulant ring noticeable in his voice as he looked almost ill-naturedly at Milford. "Every man 'at's any account has to be—he's jest obliged to be in politics. Dern me, if I was educated, I'd git there, an' don't ye forgit it, nuther!"

"Statesmanship, as it now exists, is not fascinating to me," replied Milford carelessly, feeling no interest in the conversation.

"Oh, well, go on with your hard-head an' see what ye'll come to with your dern little pomes. I don't keer."

Milford laughed.

"Well, you hain't got my spunk, young man," continued the farmer in a deprecatory tone, and letting fly a stream of dark juice from the mass of his shaggy beard, "not by a dern sight. If I wus you I'd git to Congress or I'd bust a swingletree. 'Taint no use a foolin' away yer chances on them pomes. It's too much like a woman's doin's."

"Upon the whole," said Lawson, when the farmer had taken his leave, "the old fellow was about right. This literary business is death on your prospects as a lawyer. The people will have none of it."

"The people can't help themselves," responded Milford; and at that moment a woman came into the office and stopped near the door, where she stood looking timidly and forlornly back and forth from one of the men to the other. She was about fifty years old apparently,—sallow, thin-visaged and gray-haired. Her dress was neat and of rather costly material, while her air was that of a person who, unused to society and the ways of the world, had found herself in a place where she felt utterly at a loss what to do. Lawson, as was his way whenever a client came in, rose and went down into the street. Milford politely offered a chair to the woman; she sank into it with an audible sigh.

"Are you the lawyer?" she inquired, her voice thin and quavering. She fumbled nervously about the neck-band of her dress.

"Yes, I am a lawyer; my name is Milford," he answered; "do you wish to——"

"Oh, yes, yes," she quickly exclaimed, before he could finish the sentence, lifting her pale eyes to his and letting them fall again immediately. Her breathing was hurried and her lips quivered. Twice she tried to speak further, faltering and failing each time.

Milford took a seat near her and said, in a reassuring tone:

"Do not be excited, perhaps you will speak more easily after you have rested a moment; our stairway is very steep."

She held a little leather bag in one hand, which she turned over and over on her lap with a nervous, hesitating motion.

"I thought I might come and see you, as it wouldn't be no harm," she said at length, carrying her unoccupied hand to her throat again, where a small black band was fastened by a large gold pin, in which was set the photograph of a man's face; "but I don't know as it can do any good."

"I shall be glad to do any thing I can for you," he said. "Speak freely to me, please."

"He didn't know I come here," she went on, "I come of my own accord. I felt like I must come, if,

if—if it killed me. Oh, I don't know what to say—to say to you!" She broke down and sobbed hysterically, her slight form shivering strangely. "Oh, it's so hard, so hard!"

Milford could think of nothing to say; he felt that her distress must be too deep for any relief he could offer. She was a pathetic picture as she cowered there.

"Tell me your trouble," he finally ventured, his voice conveying his sympathy, "and I will see what I can do for you."

"You don't know me—you don't know who I am. He's my boy—I'm his mother," she explained, in a gasping way.

"Of whom do you speak?" he gently inquired. "Who is your son? Is he in trouble?"

"Billy Hempstead—I'm his mother, I want to see you about him."

"Hempstead! you do not mean the young man in the jail; the one I am prosecuting?"

"Yes, him—oh!"

Milford felt a cold sweat coming out on his forehead and his heart sank within him, as he gazed at the poor broken-hearted woman, whose eyes, pale and almost expressionless, seemed to burn without light.

"Indeed, madam, I can not talk with you about him; it is out of my power. I can not think of it," he exclaimed, speaking hurriedly, almost at random; "I

am employed against him. I am sorry, but our interview must end here." He rose, thinking she would go.

She did not move, however. She nervously fumbled the clasp of her bag; her sallow face had grown ghastly and its wrinkles had deepened.

"Oh, sir, here's all the money I could get," she wailed, drawing forth from the bag a roll of bills and holding it toward him; "I want to fee you to be my lawyer. I'll get you more, I've got a farm in my own name, I'll mortgage that, I'll——"

"Stop, Mrs. Hempstead, stop, I can not listen. You must understand that it is quite impossible," he said, interrupting her. "You do not comprehend what you are trying to do. You do not wish to——"

"Yes, yes, I do, too. I know all I am doing, and I don't care for the money. Oh, I'd give the whole world to save him,—he's my baby, my only boy! Take it, take it!" She still held the money toward him, her hand shaking as if palsied. A purplish spot appeared on either cheek, adding something almost terrible to her expression.

"I appreciate your situation, I sympathize with you, indeed I do, Mrs. Hempstead; but I can not take your money or do any thing for you whatever. I am powerless. You must go to the lawyers for the defense," he said, speaking rapidly and firmly,—cruelly it seemed to him. He turned his eyes away from her, unable to bear the burning agony of her countenance.

“ But you won’t make them kill my poor, poor boy—my only one? Oh, Mr. Milford, for the good Lord’s sake, have mercy on him and me! He hain’t done nothing to you; what have you got against him? I will pay you twice as much as they will—all I’ve got in the world shall be yours!”

She tottered to her feet and stood swaying to and fro before him. “ I feel like you had his life in your hands—you can save him, I know you can, and he’s all I’ve got. My baby-boy! My precious child!”

“ You must go away, madam; it is very wrong for you to be here,” Milford exclaimed in a hoarse voice. “ Go away from me, please.” Words failed him; his mind was inoperative; he was without tact or expedient with which to escape from the predicament. He took her gently by the arm and tried to turn her toward the door. Just then a footfall sounded on the stairs, and in a moment a short, stout man came in briskly, with the air of one in a great hurry. His thin, stubby beard and upright iron-gray hair added accent to the peculiar expression of energy that shot from his face. He was clad in a farmer’s work-a-day clothes.

“ W’y, Marthy, what you here for? I’ve been a huntin’ ye all over town, an’ finally Downs he told me he seen ye come up here. What’s the matter?”

The woman glanced at him as he stepped into the room, then cowered before him in silence, almost sinking to the floor. He walked up to her and took hold

of her with rough kindness. There was something like melancholy behind the outward expression of his face ; it made itself felt in his voice as he said, aside to Milford :

“ She’s ’most distracted, lawyer, she takes it awful hard. Mus’n’t notice her.”

“ I’m glad you have come, Mr. Hempstead,” Milford managed to say ; “ it is very embarrassing to me. I’m powerless, you know, and can not afford to talk to her. It would be dishonorable, as well as unprofessional.”

“ Certainly, lawyer, I know how you’re fixed. You’re hired, jest as I hire a hand to work in the field, and you’ve got to earn your livin’ ; I don’t think hard of you ; but the weemin, they don’t rightly git at the p’int, they don’t see it in that light. Come on, Marthy, let’s be a-goin.” He wasted no words, but led her away forthwith. She turned her face as she passed through the door and gave Milford a look he never can forget ; a look of abject, unutterable despair.

The lawyer walked back and forth in his office in a mood far from pleasant. Taking the best view of what he had just passed through, it left him in no enviable or even desirable situation. Somehow, the sentence uttered by Mr. Hempstead : “ You’re hired, jest as I hire a hand to work in the field, and you’ve got to earn your livin’,” kept repeating itself, accent and all, in his mind. He went and stood by a window overlooking the street and the court-house square. Quite a crowd

of men had collected around a stand from which Downs was "crying" a sale for the county sheriff. A lot of forlorn looking household plunder, bedsteads, chairs, tables, an old stove and a heap of crockery-ware, lay on the ground, awaiting the last act in the tragedy of debt. This was the end of a petty foreclosure suit, the final work of a small chattel mortgage. The debtor stood by, with his hands in his pockets, looking rather indifferently disconsolate. Milford's state of mind rendered him acutely receptive of the effects this picture might produce. He was ready, for the moment, to say that the lawyer's life is the life of a vampire; he lives by drawing out the life-blood from his fellow-beings. It may be assumed that most men, at one time or another, suffer such a mood as this to cast a jaundiced light over their affairs, making the struggle for mere bread appear little better than a robber's work; but the imagination is closely connected with the conscience, and a man like Milford sees things in a light not afforded by the merely practical mind.

"Who're they sellin' out over there?" he heard some one call out in the street below.

"Tom Curry," another responded.

"Well, that's the way it goes," said the first; "it's all in a life-time."

"Tom orter had better luck," gruffly interposed a third voice.

There was a laugh and the sale went on. Milford

could hear the crudely humorous sayings of the auctioneer, the bids and counter-bids, and the rough jokes of the bystanders. He wondered how Tom Curry felt under the strain of the misfortune; wondered if the man had a wife and little children to suffer with him. He imagined a lean, work-worn woman with little, toddling, half-starved children pulling at her skirts. To-night they would have no bed, no stove, no table, no food, and all on account of the law and lawyers.

"Bah!" he shook himself and tried to smile at the ghastly and jaundiced picture he had conjured up. Indeed, he did smile and wonder why he had allowed such things to affect him so deeply. Nevertheless, he was conscious, for the rest of the day, of a lingering disquietude of mind, a sense of depression and dullness that rendered study impossible. It was as if he doubted himself and were afraid to go on.

That evening he went to the First Presbyterian Church to look in upon the social, that pleasant institution which has done so much for the world, especially in the West. He was late arriving, having consumed an extra hour at his boarding-house in giving instructions and advice to Downs and Mrs. O'Slaughtery, touching a purchase of some real estate they were on the point of making in a joint way. Lawson, whose interest in church matters had been expressed, as a general rule, in dollars instead of by personal attendance at the meetings, was present on

this occasion, conspicuous as much for his nearly finical fineness of clothes as for his stalwart, almost portly figure and broad, heavy, beardless face. He was in high spirits, for Chicago had been kind to him lately, especially in the matter of a heavy deal in lard. He was in conversation with Marian Wilton when Milford entered the church-parlor, and somehow his attitude, his great watch-seal, his diamond pin, and the expression of his face were suggestive, to Milford's mind, of a harmony suited to a gambling room rather than to a church-parlor. Lawson's luck-money, however, was no more apparent in his personal apparel than in the stained-glass windows yonder, or in the satin cushions of the chairs. He had been studiously liberal in his aid to the First Church, and had often laughingly declared himself an outstanding pillar of the institution—a financial deacon.

These socials were quite popular in Bankersville, as meetings where young and old came together, primarily for the good of certain charities and sundry missions, but with a strong secondary purpose of a purely social nature, which gave the old an opportunity for mild, harmless gossip, and the young quite a free field for a suppressed and rather puritanical sort of flirtation. Here Miss Crabb was in her element; killing two birds with one stone by collecting many items for her paper while enjoying an hour or two on good terms with congenial people. She took posses-

sion of Milford as soon as he came in, and could scarcely get through with the slight formality of greeting before she breathlessly said :

“Congratulate me! I’ve been crowned, I’ve completed my happiness!” She was radiant.

“Who is the fortunate man?” he asked, rather perfunctorily, his eyes wandering towards Marian Wilton.

“Man! What has a man got to do with it? Oh, yes, I suppose the editor is a man, for that matter.”

“Ah, it is literary instead of matrimonial happiness you speak of, is it? I’m glad. Tell me the good news.”

“My essay on Sappho goes into an early number of the *American Monthly*; don’t you know I’m proud? My head is nearly to the stars.”

“This is indeed something to congratulate you on,” he said, cordially enough, now that Miss Wilton had left Lawson’s side. “I am as proud of your deserved recognition as you are. It’s no easy thing to get into those aristocratic columns. But you’ll have no trouble hereafter.”

He slipped away from her as soon as possible, taking his course from one acquaintance to another, always in a certain direction, until he reached the girl he loved.

“I had begun to think you were not coming,” she exclaimed, as he came near her. “You must be growing studious.”

"Had you really given me a thought before you saw me?" he asked, and he looked into her face almost eagerly, speaking as one does when each word is loaded with intense earnestness. "I would give the whole world to know that you had." There was a fervor in his voice that seemed to convey much more than the words, and he leaned a little closer to her.

A change went over her face; her eyes fell, but she lifted them again instantly, and in her lightest way she said:

"Oh, certainly, I thought of you; it was when Mr. Lawson spoke of you." She laughed a little and continued: "One's thoughts can not be wholly controlled."

"Nor one's feelings, either," he replied, striving to fall into her manner. "I wish I knew yours now."

"If you did you might be very sorry for me," she said; and he could not tell whether she was serious or not, so inscrutable were her face and air. But in a moment she added, with a pretty smile: "My feelings are so trivial and uninteresting, as a rule, especially on occasions like this."

"You have had time to gather yourself together since you spoke," he said, "and now you have your feelings thoroughly in hand; but will you say to me that what was in your mind and heart at the moment was trivial and uninteresting?" He inwardly recoiled from something in his own words.

“That was a long while ago ; you can’t expect me to recollect now ; and, besides, you have not had tea and I should like an ice, and a hundred other things tend to make me forgetful.” She had fully recovered her lightest manner now.

He offered her his arm to take her to the room where the refreshments were spread, conscious, as she leaned airily upon him, that she was further from him and at the same time closer to him than ever she had been before—a lover’s paradox, as hard to state as it was easy for him to realize.

A woman likes a man who is wise enough to humor her moods, without appearing to do it, and she trusts him in proportion to his cleverness in trimming his sails to the breezes she sees fit to set in motion. Marian Wilton was aware that Milford regarded her with interest, but she did not permit the thought that this interest was love. In fact, she was fond of asserting, all to herself, that he was not as near her ideal of a man as was Lawson. True, Lawson was lacking in polish and that touch of sentiment which begets tenderness, but he possessed the charm which always attends success, as well as that still more doubtful quality of mere personal force.

“I wish I were as happy and hopeful this evening as Miss Crabb is,” she said, as they approached a table. “I suppose she has told you—she is telling every body.”

"I thought you looked charmingly contented when I came in," he responded; then feeling that the allusion was not quite amiable in some way, he tried to better it by adding: "Lawson has the gift of making himself good company; don't you think so?"

"Yes, he's so much in earnest about every thing, he gives one the impression that life is a wide field, with room enough for us all. His optimism is comforting and—and encouraging. He is a cheerful prophet."

"You mean that he treats one's whims with immense respect and always sees a great outcome for one's pet scheme."

"I mean that along with the rest," she laughingly replied. "Good nature is always pleasing, and he says it is very profitable, too."

"He counts profit in every thing, I believe."

"Yes, we all do, don't we, to a degree, at least?"

"Do you?" he inquired quickly. Unconsciously, perhaps, the question was thrust forward with all the abrupt force of a sudden deep feeling.

"Oh, I can't afford to dissect myself. I am not an interesting subject," she lightly answered; "and, besides, my profits have all been very small, thus far."

"You are interesting to me; I have studied you a great deal," he exclaimed, in a soft undertone. "I would give a great deal to understand you perfectly."

She stood close beside him, no one else was very near, and the room was filled with the lively murmur

of the scattered congregation. He stooped a little, and, with his lips close to her ear, said fervently:

“I love you, love you more than all the world, more than my life.”

She started slightly, and slowly over her face a pallor, just perceptible, crept like a mist, as she moved a full pace away from him. There was a light in her eyes that added infinitely to their expression, but he could not read its meaning. The moment was like a little tragedy to him, so much did he dread the pending result of his rash venture. How small and how great is love!

Miss Crabb, as was her custom, interposed herself promptly. She was like a wedge.

“Let me take a cup of tea with you,” she cried; “I feel like dissipating in a mild fashion this evening, I’m so happy.”

Marian Wilton slipped away. To Milford’s troubled imagination her disappearance was ominous—it filled him with a strange fear. It was as if Miss Crabb had banished her.

Later, when he saw Lawson preparing to walk home with her, the effect upon him was like a vision of utter defeat and despair. It made him accuse himself of weakness and irresolution; of dallying, while he ought to have striven; of sentimentalizing, while he ought to have been sternly practical and wisely selfish. Profit, profit, he had not counted the profit. Was it too late? He went to his bed in a hot fever of excitement and scarcely slept that night.

XII.

A MURDER trial was an event of unusual interest in Bankersville. The surrounding country appeared to precipitate itself into the town. The courtroom was crowded day after day as the proceedings of the case slowly struggled up through the objections, motions, arguments and other hindrances artfully interpolated by the lawyers. The judge, a mild-faced little man, kept his temper by chewing a wooden tooth-pick.

Young Hempstead, neatly dressed, a trifle emaciated and restless, sat between the great criminal lawyer and a shrewd-faced local attorney, watching the countenances of the jury, as if trying to foretell what their verdict would be.

Wilkins, the father of the murdered boy, sat close behind Milford, turning now and then a resolute, revengeful stare upon the prisoner.

The jury, ranged in two rows of high-backed chairs, showed unmistakable signs of carrying a great load of responsibility. They were mostly farmers, intelligent and kind-faced, grave, thoughtful, very solemn.

The hour had arrived for the argument to begin. The large room was packed with an eager audience. Inside the bar, seats had been arranged for a consider-

able number of ladies, attracted in the main by the fame of the distinguished advocate who appeared for the defendant.

Milford came in at the last moment before the court announced that the time had arrived for the opening of the case. He was compelled to make his way between the closely crowded chairs of the ladies. Marian Wilton looked up as he passed and smiled with a little nod of recognition. He bowed gravely, and went on to his seat in front of Wilkins.

The prosecuting attorney for the circuit arose and addressed the court and the jury. He was a clear-minded man, logical, cold, calm, and his speech was a piece of merciless analysis, setting before the jury all the details of the crime with photographic realism. He seemed to leave no room for a doubt of the prisoner's guilt in the highest degree. There was no rhetoric in his address; it was simply a mass of facts, appallingly saturated with murder. He made no appeal for vengeance, indulged in no denunciation of the prisoner, but contented himself with a dark, minutely graphic presentation of the idea involved in the evidence. He did not use an hour in speaking, but when he sat down the hush in the room seemed to tell how he had affected his audience by the force of his rugged realism. It was a full minute before any person stirred; then a slight rustle began somewhere, and ran all over the dense crowd.

The great advocate now rose, slowly assuming the majestic attitude for which he was noted, looked over the audience with a wonderful expression of pain and sorrow on his face, then with a glance at the Court, he turned and surveyed the jury with a calm, slow, beseeching look. The twelve faces changed strangely. The prosecutor's speech was already quite forgotten. The superb presence and the consummate acting of the great orator were as eloquent and fascinating as grand beauty and impressive silence ever can be.

Every ear was strained to catch the first word. Indiana and, indeed, the whole country knows well the magic of that voice which for resonant sweetness, compass and flexibility never was surpassed. It is not within the power of mere words to give the effect of its music. The speech was perhaps the most touching and tender, and at the same time the most irresistible, eloquent and overpowering ever uttered by that great master of the western bar. It closed with a peroration whose key-note was a plea for the heart-broken mother yearning for her boy, and for the boy himself, who had done the deed in the frenzy of desperation induced by disappointed love. The jury was in tears, the women were sobbing aloud, and the little judge was chewing his toothpick as if his life depended on the vigor of the performance. When the orator sat down, the audience outside the bar broke forth with a roar of applause. Judge and sheriff

hastened to restore order by threatening to clear the room.

Court now adjourned for the noon intermission and Milford's argument was to begin at two o'clock. "Remember what we expect of you," murmured the voice of Marian Wilton, as the young man passed down the broad crowded stairs of the court-house. She was leaning on her father's arm, and her face was flushed and excited. "This is the turning point of your life," she added; "you must not fail."

Dr. Wilton laughed at his daughter's earnestness. "It is, indeed, a great occasion for you," he said in an explanatory and apologetic tone, "but I hope you don't need Marian's enthusiastic urging to make you feel the opportunity."

On every side the crowding, jostling people were praising the great advocate's speech in the most extravagant terms.

"What a grand gift that man's oratory is," Miss Wilton exclaimed; "listen how every body is talking about it! Oh, if I were a man I should never rest until I had won this sort of glory—it is god-like!"

"Daughter, daughter, you are too enthusiastic; you make your statements rather florid," laughingly chided the doctor. "Your imagination is warmed up."

"I didn't cry while he was speaking," she quickly responded; "not that I condemn your being touched to tears, father, but I was too deeply interested, too

thoroughly entertained, too conscious of his power to be affected in that way."

During all this time Milford had not spoken. He was too well aware of the tremendous influence that had gone forth from the speech he had just heard not to feel the weight of his pending duty, and yet he would have preferred one tender glance from Marian Wilton to all the glory he could gain from a victory over the greatest orator of the day, here in his own town, where victory would be so sweet and so valuable. But he could discover nothing in her voice, her words, her manner, beyond the cold wish that he might succeed—a mere professional sympathy, so to speak.

"You will come back and hear me, won't you?" he demanded, at last, as they were about to part at the foot of the stairs. "I shall try to do my best."

"Oh, yes, I am coming—the ladies are all coming. There is a great interest manifested—more than you dream of," she responded. "You needn't fear that you will be without an expectant audience. Under the surface the larger number of the people is with you. They think you have right and justice on your side."

It seemed strange to him that she should say this after hearing that strong appeal to her sympathy and her sense of mercy. He wondered if it could be true that she felt no pity for that poor pale youth whose life was hanging by so doubtful a thread. His own pity just then was oppressive.

During the adjournment of court for the noon hour Milford busied himself with his final preparations, reforming certain parts of his argument and turning over in his mind the plan of its arrangement as a whole. He had overheard a good many remarks as he was pressing through the crowd to get to his office.

"Him answer that speech!" said some rural cynic; "w'y it'll be like a rabbit a-kickin' agin' a mule! I'm goin' to hear him, though."

"So'm I, an' possibly a feller might be deceived in him; he's got a eye like a sparrer hawk's, an' a cool way about him; there may be a blame sight more in him than ye think fur," remarked another.

"Hang that boy!" ejaculated a third, "I'd jest as soon hang a gal."

"No danger," put in another, "he's just as good as cle'ed now. 'T'aint no use a-buckin' agin thunder; that speech 'll save him."

Oratory is greatly prized in the West, where its music and passion have not been squeezed out by the pressure of so-called culture. Your mere lecturer may please the intellect and fulfill the demands of a polished and refined taste; but it requires the freedom of sincerity, the abandon of passion and the enthusiasm of human feeling to reach the souls of a Western jury.

Milford went to his task handicapped. The opening of his speech was, in a manner, dry and lifeless, albeit a gradual development of his plan of treating

the case served to hold the attention of his hearers. His style was fluent rather than eloquent, choice diction serving instead of dramatic force of elocution, and a close observer might have noted a trace of restraint, gradually disappearing as the current of his discourse increased in volume and velocity. At a certain point the audience began to feel his power in a peculiar way; it was as if his voice had an electrical quality and something more subtle in it that thrilled through the nerves. No one had particularly noticed that at about this time his eyes were turned for a single moment upon Marian Wilton's face, nor could it have been observed that some deep, intense, wistful, wrapt expression in her eyes had fired his brain and stirred his soul into a storm. His face began to beam with the contagious earnestness and heat of sudden inspiration and his voice gathered volume and sweetness, flooding the room with its swells and cadences heavy with the dangerous influence of passion. It was not so much what he said as his manner, his voice, his illuminated face, his courageous assaults upon the great advocate's sentimental sophistries. If he lost greatly at the point of mere personal magnetism, he gained all the more from the subtle incisiveness and peculiar charm of his oratory, coupled with his earnestness, his evident sincerity, and, withal, that nameless influence generated by actual instead of simulated passion, with which he now swept the minds of the

jurors clean of all that had gone before, so that they remembered nothing but what he was doing and saying. At the close he pictured the desolation in the home of the murdered youth, the father's anguish, the mother's despair, the darkened life of the young girl who was to have been his wife, and then he spoke of Justice, whose awful form guards the lives and liberties of the citizen. His final words were:

"Gentlemen of the jury, you are fathers, you have sons, you have daughters. You are here to say what shall be done with him who sets this example of blood-thirsty lawlessness. May your daughter choose her lover? May she signify her choice? Oh, no; the rejected suitor holds the law in his hands. He will murder your neighbor's son if that son be her chosen one. He *has* murdered your neighbor's son. There sits the old man with the fire of utter anguish burning in his heart. Where is his boy? He lies in a bloody grave in the little church-yard yonder."

At this point he paused for a single moment to pick up from the table near by the hat of the dead youth, which, with its suggestive bullet-holes and dark, horrible stains, had been introduced in testimony. It was like stopping the breath of the audience—the faces of the jury were ghastly. The speaker stood quite still, slowly turning in his hand the silent witness of the assassin's guilt; but he made no oral reference to it. Suddenly, with his frame dilating and his face emitting

a flash like a white flame, his voice burst forth in a passionate torrent.

“Where is Justice? How shall such a crime go unpunished? Ah, gentlemen, Justice has her throne in your hearts, and out from your lips must come her decree. Stand for the law against the law-breaker, stand for the poor murdered boy.” Here he rested for a mere breath, still slowly turning the hat. “And against the murderer turn the effect of his heartless cruelty. ‘Have mercy, mercy, mercy,’ wails the distinguished advocate for the defense. It is the false mercy he asks that has made it possible for assassins to hope for light punishment or none at all. Let this prisoner escape the extreme penalty and how short may be the time until I shall stand before another jury of this county holding in my hand the horrible evidence of another assassination! Heaven forbid—it chills me, it overcomes me to think of it!” His voice thickened and with an almost husky intonation he added: “Which one of you will bury the next victim? From what mother shall the next wail arise over the lifeless body of her murdered son? What home shall be darkened next?” He let fall the hat upon the table. “The eyes of God are upon you,” he cried, “the scales of Justice are in your hands, the awful power of your responsibility is on your consciences, bound by an oath which you can not break, and the facts of this horrible crime are fresh in your

minds. There is but one verdict you can render. The way of the transgressor is hard." He stood quite still for a moment gazing on the bullet-pierced, blood-stained hat. Every juror's eyes were fixed steadily in the same direction.

"Gentlemen, the case is with you," he said, and sat down.

The audience, under the spell of this strange spectacular argument, kept profoundly silent while the Court read his charge to the jury. Even during this solemn proceeding the eyes of the twelve men wandered from the face of the judge to that voiceless but awfully eloquent object on the table. The bullet-holes in it were the deep, hollow eyes of lawful vengeance.

Milford sat with flushed cheeks and throbbing veins until the charge was finished and the jury had retired to their room; then he rose and walked out of the house. As he went along toward the door he glanced at Marian Wilton. He tried not to do this, but how could he resist the feeling of triumph that burned in his blood? He longed to see how she had received his effort. Her face was pale when he turned his head suddenly and looked at her, but when her eyes met his she blushed crimson. Nobody noticed her, however, for the crowd was gazing, fascinated, on the hero of the moment—the young lawyer who had successfully answered the great advocate's speech.

Milford was glad to get away from this scene into the privacy of his office. He tried to avoid the praises and congratulations of friends, as well as the rude but well-meant remarks of acquaintances from the country. Many persons followed him, even into his office, and actually harassed him with voluble expressions of delight at his great speech.

"Oh, of course, they won't hang him," Lawson said, when the jury had been in consultation some hours without a verdict. "I knew you couldn't convict him against such a lawyer as you had to contend with; but you made your mark, all the same; you made a good speech, a remarkably good speech."

"I hope most fervently that they will not put on the extreme penalty," Milford responded; "I fear that would be too hard, considering his youth and all the surrounding circumstances."

"He'd better be hanged than go to the penitentiary," Lawson exclaimed, almost gruffly. "What's life after the stripes are on?"

"He's young, he might reform and go off to where he is not known, and—"

"Hell!" ejaculated Lawson, springing to his feet and beginning to walk the floor. "They don't reform. Their infamy follows them like a shadow—a dark, demoniac ghost! It is hell, hell!"

Milford looked at him wonderingly, seeing no occasion for his excited manner and voice, and unable to

understand the bitterness of his words; his phrases had a personal ring.

Just then the great bell sounded up in the steeple of the court-house. It was the announcement that the jury had agreed, and that the court would convene at once to receive the verdict.

Milford sprang to his feet.

"They have acquitted him, I bet," said Lawson.

"I hope so," said Milford; "or, rather, I hope it is a lighter verdict than death."

"It will give you a back-set," said Lawson.

Although it was now after nightfall, the lingering crowd filled the court-room at once, and waited breathlessly until the prisoner could be fetched from the jail. The judge looked uneasily solemn. The sheriff called the roll of the jury, each member answering when his name was spoken.

"Gentlemen, have you agreed upon a verdict?" inquired the judge.

"Yes, sir, we have," promptly responded the foreman, rising and handing a bit of paper to the sheriff, who passed it to the judge.

The prisoner, whose pale, wistful, almost waxen face, showed the harrowing nature of the ordeal through which he had been passing, trembled and fixed a faltering gaze upon the slip, as the judge unfolded it. The verdict was "guilty" and "death." It was evidently a startling surprise to the judge, as well as to

the prisoner and his counsel, for they all seemed equally affected. If any difference could have been noted, perhaps the face of the great criminal lawyer might have been declared the most pallid of all, as he involuntarily cast a glance at his youthful and unfortunate client.

With a strangely mechanical motion the crowd, after a space of gaping silence, moved out into the street, without observing that young Hempstead's mother had tottered forward and flung herself upon her doomed boy with a succession of low, broken wails.

Milford hurried from the room, followed by Wilkins, the father of the murdered youth.

"I'm satisfied now," the old man muttered, seizing the lawyer's arm with the clutch of a giant; "you done 'im up in particular good style, Mr. Milford; he's got to hang now. I'm mighty much ableeged to ye till ye'r better paid. I'll come in to-morrer mornin' and fetch yer money. You've yearnt it if any man ever did. You've worked hard for your fee."

Milford finally shook him off, as one might shake off some suffocating spell or some hideous incubus.

And so the great trial was over, but for days and nights together the phrases: "You done 'im up," and "You've worked hard for your fee," rang in Milford's ears with a persistency almost unbearably exasperating.

XIII.

AFTER the little judge had pronounced sentence of death upon Billy Hempstead, Bankersville settled down again to the "business of flourishing," as Downs expressed it. The day for the execution was set forward more than three months, and, although the dark event now and then projected a shadow, the gayety of the season was something without precedent in Bankersville society.

The lawyers for the defense had promptly taken the case to the Supreme Court, on appeal, but the judgment below had been affirmed quite as promptly, so that now, nothing, save an act of executive discretion on the part of the Governor of the State, could save the prisoner from the ignominious death to which he had been condemned.

About this time, Mrs. Goodword, known far and wide as the Woman Evangelist, came to Bankersville to begin a religious revival. She was a person of great energy and tact, full of enthusiasm, a voluble and sentimental talker, and shrewdly cognizant of the weakest points of human nature. She came, too, with the prestige of great works performed at Wahoo, and Vandalia, and Kalamazoo, and Lignumvitæ and Kokomo, and

aided by the favorable, though oftentimes humorous, comments of the newspapers.

"Seems like every thing excitin' and uncommon was comin' all at once," said Downs one day at dinner; "this here's the best stuffed chicken I ever tasted; real-estate is jest a-boomin'; there's a dance every night; we're goin' to have a hangin' next month, and that woman has got her revival red hot an' still a heatin', to say nothin' of cryin' sales, an' gittin' married 'fore long!" He glanced slyly at Mrs. O'Slaughtery as he finished this speech.

"As to the marryin' part, Misther Downs, ye moight be desaved intoirely. I've known min——" here she paused to correct her pronunciation and accent—"I have seen men take on in a terrible way when a woman chanced to change her moind—her mind, in a little matter like choosing a husband, so I have."

"They do say," exclaimed Downs, "that, next to the toothache, a broken heart is the saddest ailment a body can have; clove oil an' chloroform mixed and well shook is the only remedy."

"I'm impressed with the opinion that you'd better be a kaypin' a leetle bit of that same midicine in yer pocket all the toime, for ye moight nayd it any minute as a quick relief for a suddint attack," she replied, with a merry laugh.

It was now late in summer,—the season usually devoted by Western people to picnics, excursions to

the Northern lakes, and sometimes to a sojourn at some watering-place on the Atlantic coast ; but Mrs. Goodword's revival had been affording excitement and interest enough at home to keep the residents of Bankersville thoroughly forgetful of Petoskey and Green Bay, West Baden Springs and Ocean Grove. The dancing parties were no more, picnics had lost their charm ; even the delightful church social had been neglected for the more stimulating meetings of the fair evangelist. In fact, Mrs. Goodword had no rivals left in the field excepting the man with the roller-skating rink and the managers of the county fair, unless indeed the hangman, with the awful specter of a gallows in the background, should be considered. True, the bicycle club glided out of town on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, going away on silent wheels for quiet whirls in the country lanes between the orchards and the stubblefields ; but there was less racing talk, and the captain of the club had suddenly quit smoking and saying "by Jinks" in company.

Lawson was conspicuous just now as the only man in Bankersville who drove a pair of very fast horses : matched bays they were—valued at four thousand dollars : high steppers with small heads, large eyes, and flexible nostrils, and yet as gentle as kittens. He took no notice of Mrs. Goodword's meetings, being very busy with a secret financial scheme, of which not even McGinnis was allowed to know any thing. Of late, the

young men of Bankersville's best society had been whispering among themselves that Lawson was at times drinking hard and indulging in other dangerous dissipations. As is generally the case, this rumor did not become public, for all these young men were Lawson's friends, and he was a jolly fellow: liberal, free-hearted, the very life of their mild social orgies.

Milford was called away into the South soon after the trial, on account of some pine lands belonging to his father's estate. There had been a sudden and very great rise in the price of these lands on account of a railroad which had just been built across them. In fact, the estate, hitherto almost worthless, was now, thanks to its pine forests, quite valuable.

It was a relief to him to get away from Bankersville at this particular time, for, struggle against it as he would, a sense of depression lingered in his mind, and vaguely enough he was continually accusing himself of using unfair means to compass young Hempstead's conviction. The strangest part of all this was that he involuntarily connected Marian Wilton with this thought, although he resented it as often as it arose. His success in the trial had not made him famous, as some enthusiastic persons had predicted; the victory being tacitly if not openly attributed to a public prejudice against the prisoner, rather than to any cleverness exhibited by counsel for the prosecution.

He did not call on Miss Wilton before starting on

his southward journey. It suited his mood to hold in his heart unchanged that look her eyes had given him while he was addressing the jury, the look which it now seemed to him had sealed the young prisoner's death-warrant. It pleased him to imagine that, for a short space of time at least, he had touched the lowest well-springs of her feeling. He wondered if she had noticed how suddenly and fully he had responded to her mute appeal with that terrible assault upon the accused, and how here and there in the substance of his speech appeared the suggestions she had given him from time to time. In some obscure way he was conscious of having put aside for her certain qualms and doubts, and he hoped that she had not noticed his weakness. He even tried to get a kind of satisfaction out of the thought that, of all the world, no one but her could have influenced him in that way. At the root of all this, perhaps, was the half-smothered belief that she loved Lawson, and yet this hardly seemed possible. How could she love such a man?

It was during Milford's stay in the South that his novel, a work into which he had put a great deal of himself, came out from the press of a strong publishing-house in New York and was received by the critics with genuine broadsides of praise. It was an anonymous book, its author's name being securely withheld from the public, the publishers shrewdly availing themselves of the popular curiosity. The newspapers and

literary journals joined in making it the novel of the season, and a number of the foremost novelists of the world were compelled to deny having written it. In fact, there seemed no end to the ways in which it was kept afloat on popular attention. All this failed to impress Milford as he had once thought sudden literary success would be sure to do, and when he traced the failure to its source he found Marian Wilton. She would not sympathize with his triumph, no matter how great, brought about by the quiet and impersonal methods of mere art; her ideal was the great individual, the overbearing personality driving men before it and compassing its purposes by the sensational dramatic lift of oratory and by the force of a master's will. She would prefer the plaudits of the crowd at the rostrum to all the well-balanced praises of the critics. He recalled with vivid distinctness her estimate of Arthur Selby; how she had compared his insignificance of personal force with the magnetic bearing of certain famous orators and statesmen, maintaining in her calm yet really vehement way, that art is debilitating, as practiced now, having nothing in it that appeals to the heroic part of man's or woman's nature—mere play, indeed.

"There are no more Homers, Dantes, Miltons," she had said; "in their places we have Arthur Selbys and the analysts—pigmies with needles and microscopes, delighting themselves with what they call dis-

secting human motives—a small business, even for small men.”

This criticism now seemed to him peculiarly effective, as it shone forward over his own novel, which was nothing if not analytical in its scope and purpose. As most writers do at times, he felt the slightness and lightness of his work, and wondered if indeed Marian Wilton had foreseen what it would be. He had all the provincial's self-consciousness and was inclined to look upon his literary ambition as something vastly important; and yet, now that success had crowned his first book, he was faltering and hesitating to accept as worthy of his manhood the meed of the fiction-maker. He was almost aware, all the time, that it was scarcely his own nature out of which these doubts and this lack of faith arose. Her preferences, even her prejudices, were very dear to him and very potent in their effect upon his judgment and even his conscience.

As he traveled southward and the miles lengthened between them, he began to feel that his distance from her was immeasurable in both the physical and spiritual sense, and that by the time he could return to her she would be lost to him forever. He even went so far as to envy Lawson the luck that had cast an unearned fortune upon him, and then he turned upon himself and wondered how he had grown to be so commonplace and so groveling in his thoughts. When

love gets in, all else goes out, and when love is baffled, life becomes a dreary, monotonous labyrinth of doubt and discouragement, which not even the light of worldly success and personal achievement can make bearable. Looking back over his life, it appeared to him that fate had been against him, turning his victories into defeat and forestalling every purpose before it ripened. During his stay in the South, lengthened as it was by difficulty in negotiating the sale of the lands, he had no word from any one in Bankersville. Foolishly enough, perhaps, he wrote Marian Wilton a long letter; this was towards the end of his stay and at a time when he had grown almost unbearably impatient to return to the scenes her presence had made holy to him. The letter was full of love, and yet it did not say love, carrying in its words and phrases and between them that passionate suppression of passion which often proves more fascinating to a woman than the most direct and enthusiastic protestations of devotion could possibly be.

Milford's few surviving relatives and old acquaintances down South received him cordially enough, and yet he fancied that they felt a sort of stain attaching to him, on account of his abandonment of the lost cause, which rendered contact with him a thing to be furtively deplored. They seemed to think that he had prospered wonderfully, was rich, in fact, and that his prosperity was in some direct connection with his un-

faithfulness to his so-called country and to the traditions of his ancestors.

Milford exaggerated the strength of these prejudices, no doubt; still they existed and could not have been ignored under even the most favorable circumstances. In his peculiar situation, remembering that in the North his "rebel record," as it was called, had been a constant source of annoyance to him, he was doubly sensitive to this coolness toward him amongst his Southern acquaintances and former associates, on the ground that he had sympathized with the enemies of the Confederacy.

It was not until after he had started back to Bankersville that the thought suddenly came into his mind: "I shall arrive but a few days before the time set for the execution of young Hempstead!"

At first he seriously considered dallying at some point on the way until after the day, but the desire to get near Marian Wilton overcame every other and he hurried on. To say the full truth, he was very impatient to arrive: so much so, indeed, that the rushing, clanging cars, as they whirled him northward, seemed to him as slow as snails on the road, and as willfully dilatory as possible at all the stations. Now and again he turned upon himself and inquired why he should be so eager to reach a journey's end where nothing but disappointment awaited him; but he did not answer, save by growing still more impatient of momentary

delays. Her face haunted him as nothing else in the world can haunt a man ; but, try as he would, he could not imagine it wearing any other look than the one that had filled him with a sudden inspiration on the day of the trial, when his speech was at the point of ending in mediocrity, or worse. It thrilled him, even at this distance, to remember how he had risen to the height of dramatic energy at her silent bidding. Then always the thought would come that he had overridden his conscience and sacrificed something that he had prized very much, for her and yet for naught. Was it for naught ? Did she really care nothing for him ? What a fool he had been not to press his claim—not to urge his suit—not to besiege her with all the force of his true and deep passion ! He would do it yet : she should not escape the great happiness that such love as his could bring her. Love in a man rarely takes the form of utter unselfishness, but now he thought only of her, not of himself at all.

He reached Bankersville after nightfall. It was the full moon in August, and the beautiful little city lay dreaming in the mellow light, its church-spires showing keen and clear against a cloudless sky. The valley of the Wabash, with its bottom lands all agleam, and its river, wide and placid, winding away between scattered fringes of plane-trees, looked more beautiful than ever before. Duskiy the maple-trees over-hung the sidewalks of the streets and the blue-grass on the lawns

looked almost black. He went to a hotel, not caring to disturb his good Irish landlady at such an hour, though, for that matter, it was not ten yet and many loungers were about in the streets.

In the hotel reading-room some commercial travelers were discussing the subject of township bonds in a rather excited way, but Milford gave no direct attention to their talk. By degrees, however, he gathered that a fraud in these bonds had been perpetrated all over the state: a fraud the mystery of which had not yet been unraveled.

"There's no saying where it'll stop," remarked one of the men. "It will probably run up into the millions; there never was such a financial breeze in this state; the credit of our civil townships is utterly ruined. It is doing a heap of harm."

"Originated in Chicago, didn't it? "

"Don't know—school-furniture dealers seem to be mixed up in it."

"Yes, fraudulent contracts for fabulous amounts of desks, chairs, tables and all that. Blarney and boodle, you know."

"There's a deep old head somewhere at the bottom. No common fellow thought out the bold scheme."

"You bet; it takes intellect to set up such a job. Somebody's getting wealthy by lowering the record. Wish I had ten per cent. of the gross earnings."

"Oh, Canada's too frigid ; I don't think I could stand the climate."

"Money is a very warming thing. It makes Canada as salubrious as Florida."

"So's the penitentiary."

"Yes, but it's getting to be aristocratic, just the thing, don't you know, to spend a season with the bank presidents and retired railroad officials."

"They do say that it's got so that when a man from the states arrives in Toronto or Montreal, the first thing the hotel clerk says to 'im is: 'Can you beat extradition?' same as to say: 'Is your crime below the grade for which you can be taken back on a requisition?' It's got to a high pass, and something's got to be done to stop it."

"Yes, those Canadians ought to be made to treat tourists with more respect. It's ridiculous to have our able financiers bullied so !"

Milford heard this dialogue, as if from a great distance, and while its facts fastened themselves in his mind, the subject discussed was of no interest to him. Little he cared just then for the financial status of Indiana's civil or school townships. The bonds might go for naught, for all he was concerned in them. He had lighted a cigar and was sitting by a window. His hat was drawn low over his eyes, while he gave himself over to what had become the whole interest of his life. He was aware before he glanced

up that Lawson had entered the room, but he was surprised when he saw that a miserable, dissolute-looking old man was holding on to his arm and gazing wistfully up into his face. Lawson started perceptibly when he saw Milford, but he quickly rallied and shook off his disreputable-looking companion long enough to step forward and offer his hand with cordial greeting.

"Glad to see you," he exclaimed; "hope you had a good time in Dixie and made business all right. How've you been?"

He did not wait to hear Milford's response, but turned at once and took the old man by the arm almost roughly.

"Come up to my apartment," he said, and they appeared to precipitate themselves out of the room.

XIV.

“WHAT did you come here for?” inquired Lawson, in a voice at once petulant and, so to speak, brutally respectful, as he thrust the little old man through the doorway of his room and followed him. “Why didn’t you go away somewhere and write to me?” He turned and shut the door, locking it and taking out the key, as if every thing depended upon a strictly private interview. His face was red with excitement. “Have you told anyone here who you are?”

“No, I haven’t told—I didn’t know where to go or what to do. I felt sort of lost and lonely, and I hadn’t any body to go to but you,” said the old man, leering half affectionately at Lawson and nervously handling his hat. “I needed help.”

“How—how did you—how came you out?” stammeringly demanded Lawson.

“Good behavior—they allowed me a year for that ; I was the best one in the—I was the best one they had, they said.”

The deeply-furrowed face took on a look of pathetic inquiry, as if asking for sympathy and wondering if it would get it.

"How did you get here? Who sent you to me?" Lawson asked.

"They gave me some money when they let me out. I knew you were here. They kept me posted."

"It's a wrong move—very unfortunate. You must go away at once." The young man paused and contracted his brows in wretched perplexity. "It would ruin me if the people here should find it out. I'm on the point of ruin as it is." He was speaking half in soliloquy. After a long silence, during which he gazed abstractedly into the old man's rheumy eyes, he exclaimed with sudden force: "You must start to Canada on the first train. There's another indictment against you; don't you remember?"

"But it's been so long," the old man appealingly quavered, "do you think they'd push me on that?"

"Push you on it!" cried Lawson; "they'll hound you to the country's end. How have you escaped them even this long? Oh, there's not a moment to lose!" He was actually trembling and his lips were blue. "I couldn't bear a thing of that sort—no——" Again he paused. "Oh, the infernal luck! Why couldn't you have gone to Canada and have written me from there? It'll be sure to leak out that you've been here."

"Don't you suppose they'll let me alone, now?" the old man whined. "I've been in the—in there so

long, and I'm old and, and—and weary; they'd ought to let me rest now."

Lawson shuddered, and turning away walked back and forth, his face scowling and livid, his foot-falls shaking the floor with their weight.

"My son—my dear boy," the old man faltered in beseeching accents.

"Hush!" cried Lawson, in a stormy half whisper. "Don't use—don't say—don't you know you'll be overheard, and then I'm ruined forever! Can't you hold your tongue!"

The father sank into a chair and the son stood glaring at him, as if about to spring upon him.

"If you don't want me I'll go away; I don't want to have you suffer on my account," said the old man, in a dry, husky voice, "but I don't think they'll want to do any thing more with me. They told me to go and do right and I needn't fear. They said I suffered enough."

"Who told you that?"

"They told me up at the pen—at the—up there, you know, where they had me."

"What does that amount to? What have they got to do with it? It's the men you—you injured whom you have to fear; they didn't say you could go and sin no more." He paused abruptly and snapped his finger and thumb together savagely. Presently he went on to say: "Besides, what does it matter?"

Your presence here would ruin me, ruin me. It would precipitate—no, it's no use to talk, you'll have to go, to-night, right now, before any body gets suspicious and begins to inquire and ask questions. I'll give you money enough to take you to Canada and then I'll send you all you need."

"Yes, you'd ought to do that; it's nothing but what's right, considering that I'm your fath—"

"Hush! Hell! can't you understand any thing? Do you want to tell every body? Are you crazy?"

"No, no, no; I forgot. I'll do whatever you say; it ain't much matter about me, any way, I suppose, so's I'm let alone and—don't have to go back to the—to—go back there where I was. Oh, Chester, I couldn't stand another day, not another day of that horrid life; it would make me crazy—it would kill me!" The withered, sunken face was lifted appealingly, and the shriveled lips writhed.

"Well, you shan't go back, I'll see to that; but you mustn't stay here. The first north-bound train goes at half-past twelve; you must leave on that." He consulted his watch. "It's an hour and a half to the time."

"Yes, I'll go," said the father, forlornly fumbling in his coat-pocket; "but I'm terribly tired and sleepy." He drew out a soiled red-cotton handkerchief and tremblingly wiped his eyes. "If I could just only stay with you one night, Chester—"

"No," interrupted Lawson, "not for the world; I'd rather die every minute for a year. You don't understand how I am situated, or how your presence would destroy me, but I do. No, you must go. I'll put you in a sleeping-car—you'll be comfortable."

"Yes, you'd ought to fix me comfortably; I'm your—well, well, it's all right, I s'pose; I forget so easily. Somehow the whole world seems dim and strange since I got out. I don't feel right; my head seems light."

Lawson remained silent: his eyes bent on the floor, his brows drawn together.

The old man looked over his son from head to foot, with a mild interest lighting his face.

"You're so healthy-looking, so very broad, and tall, and stout, Chester," he said, with a trace of pride in his voice, "and look so much like your mother did." He mused awhile before he added: "They told me she got a divorce from me and married again before she died. I don't know—"

Lawson suddenly stretched forth one of his hands, as if to close the old man's mouth, and exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake, stop! Haven't I told you that this talking won't do?" He began walking the floor again, with his hands clasped over the back of his neck, his heavy head hanging forward on his chest.

"You and I are all that's left of the family, Chester; just you and I," the old man remarked, presently, in a

retrospective voice; "and it looks as if we ought to stay close together. The world is so big to be all alone in." He shrugged his narrow, tapering shoulders and shivered, like one in a draught of chilly air. "But then, we can't keep together, I s'pose, if it would do you such great harm. I'll go; it's right that I should."

"Yes, it's right," said Lawson. "It's the only safe thing for you and for me." He looked at his watch again impatiently, then continued walking heavily and slowly back and forth.

"I oughtn't to have come, I reckon," the father murmured, "but I couldn't see what else to do. They didn't give me much money—it wouldn't last long; but it's all the same anyhow, if I go off to—where did you say I must go to?"

"Canada; stop at any little town up there and write to me. I'll send you plenty of money."

"Yes, I will go—I'll write."

Lawson went to a little round table and took from under a crimson cloth a tall black bottle labeled Cognac, and a small glass goblet. He poured a liberal draught of liquor; its pungent fragrance filled the room. The old man's eyes glittered.

"Drink this," said Lawson, offering his father the glass; "it will strengthen you. It is brandy."

The bony little hands clutched it, and the weak, tremulous lips eagerly drank it dry.

Lawson swallowed a glass-full of this brandy with scarcely less show of thirst.

"It does help me," said the old man, straightening himself in his chair. "I feel a good deal better already. It's good brandy."

Lawson looked at his watch once more and said :

"It's about time to go. Now listen. You mustn't say a word to me between here and the depot, and you must pay strict attention to what I tell you to do. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Well, come on." He took hold of his father's arm. A half-hour later the old man was in a sleeping-car. His ticket was to Detroit, and he had a considerable sum of money with which to go into Canada.

Lawson breathed freer as he walked back to the hotel, but his relief was of a sort far from comforting. To say that the sudden appearance of his father at Bankersville, without the slightest warning in advance, had been startling, would be understatement. The apparition of that disheveled and forlorn old man was more terrible than a vision of Death with his scythe.

Eighteen years in a penitentiary! The record was written all over that sunken face and shriveled frame. What dissipation is so terrible in its effect as the debauchery of remorse?

Lawson went into his room in a dark enough mood. Lately, every thing had been going wrong with him.

Many of his investments had failed, and luck seemed to be setting hard and strong against him from all sides. Just now he was in the midst of a desperate struggle to save himself financially: a struggle that involved him in a web of transactions, which, if his connection with them were made public, would ruin him. For all this, however, he had ample nerve, and the fascination of so extensive and dangerous an undertaking intoxicated him, to a degree, and numbed his sense of fear. But another thing was weighing upon him and tearing up the lowest depths of his feeling. He loved Marian Wilton with such passionate abandon as is characteristic of a nature like his; and of late he had been pressing his suit to the point where always the bitterest or the most precious increment is added to one's life. She had evaded him thus far, by those charmingly annoying turns practiced by young women who waver between respect for a father's preferences and the promptings of the old young dream of love.

Dr. Wilton, with the blindness so often observable in excellent men, favored Lawson's aspirations, and occasionally mildly suggested to Marian the many advantages of the union if it should be consummated. As to her, she found Lawson very agreeable, charming, in many respects, but all the time she felt that he lacked something, she knew not what, of coming up to her standard. No man could be more polite,

more kind, more eager to serve her every whim, and yet he repelled her finest feelings in some obscure way ; it was as if her intuitions recoiled from a glimpse, now and then indirectly caught, of that vulgarity and moral coarseness which lay at the base of his soul. His success had been so meteor-like and had made such a fine spectacular effect in the Bankersville sky, that it was impossible for her not to recognize, or at least fancy she could recognize, something remarkable in his character. Of course, she knew almost nothing of his methods, or of the controlling element of mere chance that had done so much, if not quite all, for him in his dazzling exploits. Like all the rest, she saw only the surface results of his daring ventures, supplemented by what appeared to be a most unselfish generosity of spirit. The rumors now and then furtively set afloat in the streets impugning the honesty of his operations, had never reached her, nor had she ever noted in his conduct any thing, however slight, indicative of unworthy motives ; and yet while in his presence she was half aware that he was repressing something, that he was all the time watchful, lest a secret of his inner life should leap into the light and betray his other and hidden self.

It vexed and exasperated Lawson to see Milford return to Bankersville just at this time. He felt that it boded evil to him—a check, a hindrance, if not a positive end to his tenderest hopes.

All night he dreamed, awake or asleep, of what he would do to-morrow—how he would go to Marian Wilton and urge her to answer him before Milford could have time to interfere. He tossed in his bed and revolved a wild plan for getting together all his available means and of persuading Marian to consent to a hasty marriage and a swift flight to Europe. Schemes which seemed entirely feasible to him in the long, hot spaces between his snatches of sleep, fell into impracticable confusion when day-light came, and the noise of busy life arose in the street under his windows.

The morning papers contained two matters very unwelcome to Lawson's eyes: a sudden decline in the price of wheat, and what appeared to be the beginning of a full unravelment of the fraudulent school-furniture bonds of the Indiana townships; but startling as these things were, a line or two in the *Scar* drove them out of his mind. It was an editorial sentence, a mere interrogation, without comment or further remark, as follows:

“Who was the shabby, suspicious-looking old man who tackled Mr. Chester Lawson so unexpectedly on yesterday afternoon?”

He glared at the paragraph in a paroxysm of rage, but the considerations that came crowding into his brain soon beat down his wrath. This was no matter about which he could afford a public quarrel. Evidently

the editor of the *Scar* was close upon the track of his past history, and one misstep, though the shortest ever made, might precipitate exposure. What a coward is he who guards a secret!

Lawson felt that promptness and perfect self-control might serve his turn; so, with a smiling face, he went into the editorial office of the *Scar*.

"Hello! good morning, Mr. Lawson," exclaimed the editor, jumping up and coming forward to meet him; "come up to black my eye for referring to your interview with that tragic old cuss? Who the devil was he, anyhow? Never saw a man so astonished as you appeared to be, about that time."

"I think you would be astonished, too, under the same circumstances," said Lawson, fixing his eyes steadily on those of the editor and smiling in the most cordial way. "Think of an old tramp like that flying at you and trying to hug you and kiss you, right there in the open street!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the editor; "ha, ha! it was just too funny! Who was he?"

"Ask some one who knows," said Lawson, beginning to feel easy; "he was as strange as Adam to me. I never saw him before in my life. He took me thoroughly unawares and upset me strangely. I never was so put out and embarrassed."

"And what became of him?"

"Don't know; evaporated I hope."

There was a curious look lurking in the editor's eyes that Lawson did not quite like, but the interview, upon the whole, was rather reassuring. Evidently it was mere suspicion of some vulgar secret, if the editor really was harboring a thought of any thing not yet divulged in the matter.

"Well, it was a ridiculous spectacle for your eyes, no doubt," Lawson remarked, as he finally rose to go; "but it had a touch of tragedy in it, to my mind. The old fellow looked startlingly pathetic and his voice was so strangely, beseechingly insistent." He offered the editor a dark, costly cigar, and added: "We'll end the matter in smoke."

All this, when Lawson was gone, struck the editor as rather peculiar, especially in view of the fact that a policeman who reported news items for the *Scar* had told him that the old man in question had been put into a sleeping-car by Lawson and sent northward on the night-express train.

It may be set down as a fact that something is required more substantial and binding than a Havana cigar, no matter how good, to bribe a country editor when he scents a local scandal or a bit of mysterious personal news. Not that he will refuse the cigar—the chances are large that he will not—but it must be remembered that the press is no respecter of persons, it must give the news with utter impartiality.

The *Scar* editor sat for a long while, leaning far

back in his chair, with his feet on the sanctum table, smoking that delicious Cuban *maduro* and meditating the probabilities of working up a sensation. It was very plain to him that Lawson had not told the truth, and that there was a mystery of no common sort connected with the coming and the going away of that peculiarly-dressed, hungry-faced old man. At all events he thought it a good thing to investigate further, and that it might serve him a valuable turn to seem to know more than he really did, so he set to work in earnest with a pretty clear purpose in view.

Meantime Lawson had hurried away to see McGinnis, who was thoroughly involved in the same financial web which the young man felt drawing so tightly around him. Something must be done at once or the worst must befall. But not even McGinnis dreamed of the desperate extremes to which Lawson had gone, or of the wide sweep of his liabilities; much less did the shrewd-minded banker suspect the young man's connection with the township frauds.

If Lawson should fail, it would come upon Bankersville like a thunderbolt out of the sun. Nearly every business man in the little city had money in the young speculator's hands, for one purpose or another, and not one of them felt the least uneasiness in that regard. It is strange how slow men are in the matter of suspecting those who should be suspected, and how swift to doubt those whom it is base injustice not to trust.

The man who starts with luck in his favor finds the breeze of public sympathy blowing him on long after his own forces have failed. Lawson had had some exceptional advantages in this regard. McGinnis had been a wall of strength to him ; and then it is so seldom that a citizen of a small city like Bankersville experiences such a run of fortune, that, when it does really happen, the little world, as a rule, goes crazy over the dazzling event and makes a hero of the child of luck, —a rule faithfully followed in the case we are now considering.

XV.

I N the afternoon Milford walked down the street leading past Dr. Wilton's house, not having quite formed the purpose of calling upon Marian, but hoping that she might be out on the little lawn, or visible somewhere else, so that he might have a smile from her and lift his hat and, perhaps, stop at the gate and say a word or two to her. He had given all the forepart of the day to matters in his office, and imagined that he had need of this walk; he even tried to satisfy his conscience with the suggestion that the particular direction his steps were taking had been chosen by sheerest accident.

Lovers and gamblers are always superstitious—every thing is prophetic to them. They see signs and omens and peculiar meanings in the commonest and smallest events. Milford felt the propitiousness of the fact that just as he reached the gate Marian was standing ready to step into an open carriage that stood by the side-walk. Moreover, she was looking superbly beautiful—tall, fair, strong, dressed in blue to the best possible effect and smiling serenely, as if anticipating the pleasure of her favorite drive down the valley road.

She was buttoning a glove, while the small negro boy who was to serve as driver, was standing in a respectfully careless attitude holding the lines. So busy was she with the moment's task, she did not notice Milford's approach until he was very near her, then she started and blushed prettily as she recognized him.

"Dear me!" she cried, "you startled me! I was not expecting you." She offered her hand quite cordially, advancing a step so that he might take it.

"How bright you look! I need not ask if you have been well," he said, letting her hand go slowly out of his.

"I was just on the point of driving down the river road," she remarked; "were you going in?"

"No," he answered, with a touch of wistfulness in the way he glanced at the little bay-window. "I was just walking for exercise."

"Oh, then, why not drive with me? We will see if you like the Wabash as well since you've had another look at the Coosa—that's your Georgian river, isn't it?" she inquired, motioning to the little black boy to turn the carriage so that the wheel would be out of the way; then springing in before Milford thought of offering to help her, she called out: "Get in; the old horse is asleep whenever he's still, and papa says that's a sign he isn't driven enough."

Milford got in beside her and felt a calm, delicious restfulness and contentment steal throughout his con-

sciousness. The boy flourished the whip and the old fat horse trotted joggingly down toward the river. They soon passed out from the town into a broad lane which wound along in the bluff of the valley, now past an orchard heavy with apples, now in the shade of grand maple-trees, and anon between dusky hedges of *bois d'arc*. Overhead was a cloudless sky, soft and blue, and yonder the slow, silvery river shimmered through the plane-trees and clumps of water-beech and papaw bushes. There was a light breeze out of the northwest, cool and sweet from the grassy prairies a few miles away. They heard cow-bells tinkling and, far off, the whirring sound of a steam-machine threshing clover.

If they had chanced to look back, as they left the gate in front of the Wilton cottage, they might have seen Lawson approaching, but they did not turn their heads. He saw them get into the carriage and his face betrayed the disappointment and jealousy he felt; not the dangerous, tragic passion of romance, but that rush of feeling natural to a man of his temperament under the circumstance of the situation. He stopped short, and turning about went back the way he had come, after gazing for a moment at the departing vehicle and the two figures sitting so close to each other in the rear seat. It was a moment of quiet, silent tragedy, wherein one man began to be happy—another to feel the weight of a dreary fate.

Milford was content for awhile to sit beside Marian in silence and enjoy the fair, balmy weather that blew upon his face and through his heart. Just then the valley of the Wabash was indeed more lovely than the wildest gorge of the Coosa or the Etowa.

"Did you get my letter?" he inquired presently.

"What letter?" she demurely demanded; and he saw a pink flush come into her cheek.

"My long letter from Marietta?"

"Did you write one?"

"Yes."

Silence fell between them; she seemed quite satisfied to have the conversation end here, as she allowed her eyes to wander over some rolling stubble-fields where great stacks of yellow straw shone like gold.

"Did you say you did not get my letter?" he presently ventured.

"Did I? No." She did not look toward him.

"No to what? Did my letter reach you?" he persisted.

"Why don't you ask me how I have progressed with my law-studies? I am through Blackstone, and have nearly finished the first volume of Kent. Don't you think that's pretty good, for me?"

"Why didn't you answer my letter?" he continued, as if examining a witness.

"Why, didn't you get my answer?" She could not help giving him a quick glance of quasi inquiry.

"Did you write one?"

"Now I know you didn't get it. I'm so glad!" she exclaimed. "I always write such foolish letters. My epistolary gifts are not worth having."

"You make a mighty poor start for a lawyer," he remarked, with a slight laugh; "you will have to school your face and teach it not to tell tales."

"You don't see but one side of my face," she responded, "and you can't know what the other side may be telling."

"See how the river is ablaze yonder!" she added, lifting her hand and pointing at a sun-lit stretch of water lying between them and a brambly bluff, on top of which some cows stood strongly outlined against the sky.

The road now made a turn, its course running parallel with the river bank and up the stream, with the roofs and spires of the little city on one hand and the broad valley on the other. Some thickly set vineyards and tidily kept market gardens bordered the way.

"Where are you taking us to, Israel?" Marian demanded of the lounging driver-boy.

"Up dis yer way," was the ready answer.

"Not past that awful starch factory, Israel, please," she continued; "and, Israel, we are not curious about the pork-house, do you hear?"

"Yes'm, I not gwine dar. I's gwine roun' de mill road—"

"Not past the brewery, Israel?"

"No'm, up de Douglas Street road, an' roun' by de coffin factory."

"Oh, Israel, what a cheerful choice! but go on."

"Yes'm."

"What did you put in your answer to my letter?" Milford asked, coolly ignoring the attempted diversion.

"Oh, if you didn't get it I must have failed to mail it," she exclaimed. "I'm so forgetful sometimes."

"Marian," he murmured; and it was the first time he had dared to address her in that way; "don't be too light about it—it's a great deal to me."

"Israel, this surely is the very way past that disgusting factory, isn't it?"

"No'm, I turn off'n dis yer road d'rectly, down yer by de grabeyard."

"How consoling."

"Yes'm."

Marian and Milford looked at each other and laughed, she in genuine merriment, he in sheer despair of himself.

She carried in her lap, in keeping with the prevailing vogue, one of those unhandy little flat leathern bags with a clasp, like a money-purse, and with handles after the fashion of those baskets our grandmothers were fond of. This she now opened, carelessly taking from it a dreamy film of white lace in the shape of a handkerchief. Milford was actually startled when his

letter to her, clinging in the folds of the delicate lace, was turned out upon her lap in plain view: the bold superscription uppermost.

"Oh!" she involuntarily ejaculated, and her face flushed. She snatched the envelope and thrust it back into the bag.

"What shocking carelessness!" he could not help saying.

She glanced at him and they both laughed rather unrestrainedly.

Their direction was now facing the breeze, which, coming down the river, brought a smack of the water's grateful coolness along with the fragrance of the fresh mold heaped around the celery in the gardens.

"Aren't we going very slow, Israel?"

"Yes'm."

"Well, brighten up a little."

"Yes'm."

"Marian, did you, really and truly, did you answer that letter?"

"I was going to one of these days, but you didn't give me time."

"Well, answer it now."

"I haven't any pen or paper or——"

"Marian, do you love me?"

Her cheek was very pale now and for a time her eye-lids drooped heavily.

Again the fat old horse changed his course; and now

they began to climb out of the valley up toward the city.

"Tell me that you love me," he urged in a low, passionate half-whisper.

She trembled, but looked for a second straight into his honest, earnest eyes, and the flush leaped back into her cheeks.

"Ki! dey's gittin' 'long wid de gallus putty fas'," exclaimed Israel, at this sweet moment, pointing with his whip to call attention to a tall, ominous-looking frame-work of new timbers inside the inclosure of the Bankersville jail-yard, which was now in plain view from the road. "Up dar on dat highes' place 's wha' dey ties de rope, an' down dar on de little flat plank fixin' 's wha' he stan's when dey——"

"Hush, Israel!" she exclaimed. "Go some other way, please; I don't like this. Make haste, do you hear?"

"Yes'm." He stopped the horse and added, meantime gazing at the hideous engine: "I dunno which way I *kin* go now. I's kinder boddered."

"Turn around, you little villain, and drive back!" cried Milford, feeling a shudder run through his frame.

"Yes, sah." Still gazing at the scaffold, as he began pulling the horse slowly around, he remarked: "I's gwine ter see dat hangin', sho's I lib. I never did see nobody hung. Spec' it's powerful 'musin'."

"Israel, Israel! I'm ashamed of you," exclaimed

Marian; "hush immediately; do you hear? Not another word."

"Yes'm. Guess he look 'musin' when——"

"The little cannibal! The Hottentot!" ejaculated Milford. "Amusing, indeed!"

The old horse jogged briskly back down the slope to the river, where a graceful iron bridge had been flung across from bank to bank. The little negro kept looking back in a fascinated way.

"Mus' I dribe ober?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Milford.

"Across and down to the mill bridge and then over home," added Marian.

"Yes'm."

They crossed the airy bridge in silence, and slowly made their way to the top of the river terrace beyond.

"Ye kin see de gallus f'om yer jes' es plain," remarked Israel. "It looks bigger'n it did when——"

"Israel, hush!"

"Yes'm."

"If you speak again—if you open your mouth again," cried Milford, "I'll break your heathen neck! Do you hear?"

"Yes, sah; but how I git my bref, sah? How I gwine ter enjoy dat hangin' ef——"

"Israel!"

"Yes'm."

Israel touched the old horse with the whip and presently muttered:

"Now ye can't see it no mo', it done gone erhind de trees. Hope I nebber gwine ter be hung dat a way."

The shadows were stretching out across the beautiful valley; the air had caught something like a foretaste of the dewy evening freshness; they could plainly hear the rumble of gudgeons and the creak of cogs coming up from the old water-mill among the white-armed plane-trees.

"I have never told you how proud I was of your speech," she said pleasantly, though she felt that there was a touch of something forbidden in the subject.

"I hate myself and shall always hate myself on account of that speech," he exclaimed, with sudden energy, his voice rising almost to fierceness.

She looked at him wonderingly. Her eyes fell before the concentrated earnestness of his gaze.

"Why do you say that?" she ventured.

"It was all wrong," he cried, "all wrong. I had no right to try to build up my reputation as a lawyer at that terrible cost to that boy."

"But you did not," she quickly said; "you simply did your duty."

"Men must not rent themselves out to do duty for a price," he bitterly exclaimed. "I did not act under a sense of duty."

She was thoughtful for some moments. A pair of

blue-birds flitted along ahead of them twittering musically and merrily. The old horse, out of respect for immemorial habit, shied harmlessly as he passed the jarring, growling, dusty mill.

"I should have been terribly disappointed if you had failed," she said, at length.

"I knew you would," he exclaimed; "I saw that. Your desire controlled me, fired me with an almost reckless enthusiasm. I did it for you, Marian, for you!" Then he suddenly realized the almost cowardly ring his words might seem to have. He was afraid that she would think he meant to put the burden of responsibility on her, and he tried to think of some explanatory phrases with which to soften down his expression and give its meaning a better trend; but she did not wait for him to do this.

"Do you really think he was wrongfully convicted? Wasn't he responsible? What *do* you mean?" she hurriedly, almost excitedly cried.

"I don't know—this question of responsibility is a grave one—but I—" he hesitated, "I didn't mean to blame you in the matter; you encouraged me; you didn't make me—that is—"

"Oh, but it's horrible, awful, if they are going to hang him and he innocent, or irresponsible, all because you made such a powerful speech! And I urged you on—"

She paused, as though her breath had been caught

from her. With the quickness of electricity the whole situation was revealed, and she saw the part Milford's conscience was assigning to her. The court-room scene arose before her with a ghastly vividness, and, clothed in a new and terrible significance, it startled her as only a sudden and unexpected apparition could.

"I made you do it," she said with strange emphasis.

"No, you didn't—you had nothing at all to do with it, you—"

"Yes, I did," she said, firmly enough now; "I see it all very plainly; it was very wrong. I was weak and ambitious."

Milford would have given worlds, had they been at his command, to be able to recall his unfortunate words. He saw that they had gone to her heart and that she was dismayed at the picture they had conjured up. Her face was white and pinched.

They were trundled across the river again, this time on an old mossy, wooden bridge whose two spans met on a heavy stone pier in the middle.

"Marian," Milford presently said, in a slow, firm way, "you shall not blame yourself; I can't bear it, and, besides, it's unreasonable, it has no foundation in fact."

"This execution must not take place," she exclaimed, taking no notice of his remarks. "It must be stopped. I can not sleep until it is."

"Please don't be excited," he urged gently, venturing to touch her hand, "you pain me terribly."

"Don't," she cried, taking away her hand. "It is an awful state of things. Can't there be a reprieve, a pardon, or something? Hasn't the Governor the power?"

"Yes, he has, but—"

"But he *must*!" she cried, anticipating what he was going to say. "He must, he shall!"

Milford was thoughtful for a time, as his memory ran back over the whole trial. He shook his head.

"No," he said, "the Governor is not likely to interfere where the Supreme Court have passed upon the case, reviewing the merits. It is too late to hope for any thing now."

"Too late! No, no, not too late; it must not be, it shall not be!" She spoke firmly, almost coldly now, but her little gloved hand was clinched and her eyes were very bright.

The old horse pricked up his ears as they came into the street leading home, and forthwith he began to quicken his gait.

Milford and Marian looked at each other as the carriage stopped at the Wilton gate. For a space, neither stirred. The invisible but heavy load that hung between them seemed to hold them where they sat.

Israel turned the wheels to let them out, then jumped to the ground and stood waiting, holding the

lines. He, too, had his burden of soul disturbance. He muttered absent-mindedly :

“ Ef I kin git ter go to dat hangin' I's gwine ter be des es happy es a big sunflower, kase I nebber seed nobody hung afore in my life. I's gwine ter climb onter de top o' dat high fence what's roun' de gallus, den I kin see 'im a-hangin'— ”

Miss Wilton gave the boy a look which appealed to his great love for her, and he became silent. Milford got out and helped her to follow. She was still very pale and there was a worried look noticeable in her face. He thought she wished to be alone.

“ Will you come in and have a cup of tea with us? ” she asked ; “ I see papa at the window.”

“ No,” he said, “ I must go to my office. Give him my greetings.”

He half turned to go, but lingered to open the gate for her.

“ We shall see you soon, I hope,” she managed to say with a smile.

“ Yes, I will come.”

He walked away in a strangely sad mood : a mood for which he could not have accounted satisfactorily even by coloring his predicament as strongly as he might, save by admitting that he had given Marian Wilton a blow which would leave an incurable wound in her pure conscience. Then the vision of that gallows ! He shuddered inwardly as he walked along.

The thought that he had connected her with the dreadful event about to come struck him now with bitter force. What cowardice it seemed! He felt that he had cast upon her a load that he had been too weak to carry for himself.

XVI.

MARIAN WILTON was not inclined to be over-imaginative, nor had she ever shown a disposition to indulge what is called girlish sentimentality. On the contrary, she often carried her practical treatment of whatever came up to be considered to an extreme which elicited from her father very decided expressions of disapproval. Not that he ever scolded her—that could not have happened—but his views of the scope and extent of woman's usefulness were thoroughly old-fashioned and commonplace, and he often gently explained them to her in a way suggestive of what he should like for her to do.

They were great comrades, the old doctor and his daughter, believing in each other without reserve and conferring together about every thing. When they agreed on any proposition, their conference was not a whit pleasanter than when they disagreed; for they always separated with a kiss and with affectionate words and smiles. The doctor was not a deep man nor was he very broad, notwithstanding that he considered himself a model of intellectual liberality. He was of the old school in every thing, and yet he affected many

of the most ultra ways of the radicals. Especially was his patriotism violent and his prejudice against "ex-confederates" bitter, almost unreasoning, particularly about the time that an election was coming on. He appeared to grow almost rabid in his mild, harmless way, when he approached the ballot-box. Despite all this, he had formed a liking for Milford, which had finally ripened into a deep friendship marred by nothing save a reserve of protest against the young man's "rebel record," a protest always rather unruly when excited to activity by any political emergency, especially when party-spirit ran high. Just now there was no election near at hand; the newspapers were amiably gloating over a recent victory, or were looking after the mistakes of a new administration with one eye, and with the other scanning the social horizon for the least cloud of crime or scandal; so the good doctor sat in his library reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and feeling quite liberal and philosophic, all his prejudices in abeyance, until the time when the politicians should need his help. It was a most auspicious moment for Marian's purpose. She came in and sat down close beside him and laid a hand upon his stout knee.

"Father," she always called him father, instead of papa, when she was very serious, almost solemn.

He put aside his book and smiled placidly through his white, soft beard and peculiar half-moon spectacles.

"What is it, daughter?"

"I have something very important and urgent that I want you to consider," she said, looking straight at him with her strong, honest blue eyes, "and there is no time to lose, not a moment."

"Why, what can it be?" he exclaimed; "you look excited, Marian."

"I am excited; it's enough to excite any body," she responded, "and I don't see what's to be done—but it *must* be done, too!"

"Why, dear me, child," he said, laying his white, plump hand on her shining hair; "I never saw you so nervous; what is it? Come, be calm and tell me."

"Oh, father! father!" she cried, and resting her head on his knee she burst into hysterical sobbing.

"Daughter! daughter!" ejaculated the old man, throwing one arm gently around her and drawing her closer to him. "This is strange; speak, dear, tell me what it is."

She was ashamed of her weakness and made a brave effort to get control of herself. A vague suspicion had leaped into Dr. Wilton's mind that here was a trouble that in some way was connected with love. He was an old man, but not so old that he had forgotten the symptoms of tender passion.

"Is there no way, father, by which that poor boy can be saved?" Marian presently demanded, in a steady enough voice.

"What boy?" bluntly inquired the father, his face

showing perplexity blended with curiosity and a certain kind of relief from the strain her mysterious grief had put him to.

“Hempstead—the boy they’re going to hang—oh, father, he must be saved from that death—he *must* be!”

Dr. Wilton was silent for a short time, then he smiled. A man never allows a chance to go by without exhausting all the material it offers of persecuting for her opinions’ sake the woman who is just then nearest him.

“You ought to be a lawyer enough by this time, to know, my dear, that his doom is sealed,” he said in his mildly sarcastic, loving way.

“But I don’t know,” she exclaimed, almost pettishly, her lips pouting prettily; “it’s an extreme case, and oh, papa, he’s not guilty, that is, he’s not—not responsible, you know, and it was Mr. Milford’s great speech that led the jury to put on the death penalty, and I——”

“Daughter, you are getting excited again; don’t talk so fast. What have you been doing to get yourself so wrought up?”

“I caused him to do it—I am to blame for it,” she went on.

“You! child, you are beside yourself! Why, my dear, poor daughter, you never saw him before the trial—you are——”

"Never saw Mr. Milford?"

"Oh, I don't understand——"

"His speech, his cruel, deadly speech. I urged him and forced him; yes, *forced* him to make it against his better feelings, contrary to his conscience, and that was what condemned the poor boy. Oh, I can't bear it!"

Dr. Wilton felt deeply touched, and yet there seemed to be something in the situation that vaguely appealed to his subdued love of comedy. He could not enter fully into Marian's sentiments; his imagination gave no over-pathetic glamour to the facts as they existed.

"Marian, this is absurd, ridiculous," he said, almost sternly, taking off his gibbous spectacles and putting them on again immediately; "you talk wildly and—and hysterically. I don't know what to think of you; you're not like yourself, at all."

She brushed the tears from her cheeks and sat up straight in her chair, and he could see that she was focusing her will on something about which she intended to be very determined.

"Papa, I have made up my mind to save that boy's life and I am going to do it," she said. "It will render my whole life miserable if I don't."

"But what interest have you in a murderer, Marian? It was a cold-blooded, premeditated way-lay and assassination. His conviction was legal and his punishment will be just."

"It's not so much him, as—as—" she faltered with a flushing face. "Mr. Milford is very much distressed, and I—I feel that I caused it all."

A crepuscular gleam of the very truth began to enlighten the old man's mind.

"You caused what?" he quite peremptorily demanded.

Her eyes fell. She made two or three movements to speak before she finally said in answer :

"He wanted to abandon the prosecution—he felt so sorry for the young prisoner—but I urged him not to do it. I begged him to make that speech. I suggested points to him. I held up to him the reputation, the fame he could make by a successful prosecution ; I incited him, inspired him, and he broke over his conscience to—to do what I wanted him to do, and I'm just as miserable as I can be and so is he."

At this point the twilight in the mind of Dr. Wilton broadened into the glare of day. He saw that his daughter was in love with Milford. The discovery was not very welcome, not quite pleasing. Indeed, it vexed him.

"This is a sort of sentimental stuff I was not expecting from you, Marian," he said, making a motion as if to get up from his chair. She put her hand on his shoulder very tenderly, and fixed her eyes earnestly on his.

"Father," she murmured, and her voice was very

rich and sweet. "Father, I love him—you won't object—you won't be offended—you——"

"Daughter!"

"Papa."

She precipitated herself upon him and with her strong, young arms wound about him she kissed his forehead, and his lips, and his cheeks. He could not say a word; he was as much surprised by her impetuous embrace as he was touched by her tenderness and confiding outrightness. He stammered confusedly, tried to push her away with one hand while he was pressing her close to him with the other.

"Well, well, well, I must say!" he ejaculated; "this is remarkable. I don't understand how it can—how you—how I—how——"

"It's true, any way," she said, releasing him with a sigh and a rather dubious smile. "And it's too late to change it now."

"That is what I think; the sentence will have to be executed; there's no way to save him now," remarked Dr. Wilton after a little thoughtful pause. Her smile became more secure—she even laughed; her father mixed up the different subjects so strangely it was almost funny. But she grew serious again in a moment.

"I can't think of giving up the attempt, father; I feel bound to do it, because I know it was I who brought it all about, and he knows it, too. Now help

me, won't you? There's a good, kind, generous papa. Tell me what to do."

"Do? You can't do any thing, Marian."

"Oh, but I must, I will; there's no other honest course. He feels like a murderer, and I like an accessory."

"He is one. Didn't he hide behind a hay-stack and shoot young Wilkins?"

"Well, but I mean Mr. Milford—I mean that *he* feels that way."

"Oh, he—he feels that way?"

"Yes, and I caused him to do it. I persuaded him, urged him, goaded him on to do it," she vehemently exclaimed. "I *forced* him to do it."

"To do what?"

"Father, don't you understand that he thinks young Hempstead ought not to be hanged—he thought so all the time, and didn't want to prosecute him so mercilessly; but I was ambitious for him, I wanted him to be victorious over that great criminal lawyer, and I made him—yes, just *made* him have no conscience, no mercy, no pity. So you see it was I that really turned fate upon the poor boy."

"Well, I must say, Marian, you surprise and—and trouble me. This is all sentimentality; you are allowing your feelings to override your judgment. Come, come, this won't do!" He was wiping his spectacles vigorously with his handkerchief as he spoke, and

his face showed that he felt more than his words implied.

"But the Governor might reduce his punishment to imprisonment for life?" she ventured, in that meekly firm way her father knew so well how to interpret; "there might be a petition?"

"It would do no good—none whatever. They are criticising the Governor now for being too lenient to criminals; he can't afford to interfere." Dr. Wilton said this with the air of putting an end to the discussion.

They had risen and were standing nearly facing each other: Marian, with hands lightly clasped before her, her head drooping, her eyes fixed on the carpet at her feet. She was almost as tall as her father, and her figure was superbly strong and well turned. In a moment she looked up and said:

"If you will not forbid me, I will get a petition and take it to the governor. I must do that much."

Dr. Wilton scarcely knew what to say. It was a proposition he did not wholly like, and yet he saw by Marian's face and manner that she could not bear a refusal. If he had been closely questioned he would have been compelled to admit that her statement of the case had aroused in him some strange feelings. If she really felt that she had caused the conviction of young Hempstead, it would make her just as miserable

as if it were true. Moreover, her influence on Milford, no matter how imaginary, evidently was a reality, so far as her conscience was concerned. As president of the college, and as professor of mental and moral philosophy, he had been training his mind for years to grapple with obscure problems of the soul and mind, and now he felt this one taking great proportions. He could not solve it in a moment. It was a great relief to him when the door-bell rang and Miss Crabb was admitted. She had a copy of Arthur Selby's magazine in her hand, in which the editor, reviewing the leading novel of the season, stated that it had leaked out that its author was a Mr. Milford of Bankersville, Indiana.

"I'm just perfectly delighted," cried Miss Crabb, as soon as greetings were over and Dr. Wilton had excused himself and retired; "it's perfectly charming to think that, after all, Bankersville has the honor of owning the new star of the literary heavens!"

She proceeded to read aloud from the magazine the flattering notice of the novel and the surmise as to its author.

"It is a mistake," said Marian. "I am quite sure that Mr. Milford did not write the book."

"Have you read it?"

"No."

"Well, I have, and it's just as much like him as it can be. You'll say so yourself when you read it. I'll

send you my copy—advance sheets unbound, you know. I'm going to give it a rousing send-off here."

"But you mustn't say he wrote it——"

"Oh, certainly not; but I'll copy this from the magazine, you know. That will be enough. His fortune is made—this book has put him on the very top wave."

Marian let go a little fluttering sigh, but said nothing.

Miss Crabb went on to talk, skipping from one subject to another, until finally she said:

"They're circulating a petition to get Hempstead's sentence reduced to imprisonment; all the jurors have signed it—so has the judge. I hope it will succeed, don't you?"

Marian started, she could scarcely speak.

"Oh, if it can be done, what a relief it will be!" she cried.

"Yes, the whole town is gloomy. Just to think, it is the first death-sentence ever pronounced in Bankersville! And that dreadful scaffold! Ugh! I dream about it of nights. Would you believe it? the publisher of the *Scar* has refused to sign the petition, and I just know it is because he thinks the horrible affair will sell a large edition of his disreputable sheet. But every body is signing it, just to save the credit of our town, you know; Bankersville couldn't afford to have such a blood-curdling spectacle within its limits."

"Have any women signed the petition?" asked Marian.

"I don't know, I'm sure, but it would be a good idea, wouldn't it?" Miss Crabb responded; then continued glibly: "If they could get a large number of women's names, it would be a great influence; women are gaining in influence every day, don't you think so?"

"Yes—I don't know—it seems so," Marian falteringly acknowledged; "we must do our best in this endeavor."

"It's a good suggestion, I'll see about it," Miss Crabb exclaimed. "Why wouldn't it be a good idea to get the murdered boy's parents to sign it?" she went on. "His mother especially," she added, as she followed the thought with her usual audacity. She wound up by saying: "It was Mr. Milford's splendid speech—that's what every body says—more than it was the testimony, anyway. Of course the boy ought to be severely punished, as a warning, you know. Oh, how Mr. Milford is rising! I envy him. Why couldn't I have written that novel? But then a woman's got no chance, unless she takes a man's name, like Craddock, or George Eliot, or Georges Sand, or George Fleming. I won't do that; I won't have fame if I have to pretend I'm a man to get it!"

"Why, I think you are getting fame without any thing of that sort," said Marian, rather abstractedly.

"I thought so too, a few months ago," Miss Crabb frankly and somewhat bitterly acknowledged, "but I can't get a thing printed now, not a thing; just every thing comes back with the same whine about crowded columns and manuscripts on hand, and regrets and all that sort of thing. But then Mr. Milford's novel is a good one—superbly good; it deserves all the praise it gets and more. You shall read it. I don't think I shall write any more myself. I'm utterly discouraged. This thing of literature is a good deal like gambling, the lucky ones walk off with the prizes. Merit, for merit's sake, doesn't have much show, that is, if a woman offers it. I suspect that the world was made to a man's order, in the first place; anyway, men have got the start and are likely to keep it. Don't you think so? I wish I were a man for just one year—if only to test the world's sincerity."

When Miss Crabb had gone away, Marian gave herself up to the consideration of how she could aid in obtaining commutation of Hempstead's sentence. This thought had taken complete control of her.

Miss Crabb was too busy with her own grievance to notice the effect her talk about young Hempstead's case had made upon Marian. Indeed, what to her was life, or death, even by the gibbet, compared with her passion for writing and the bitterness of her sense of failure? Arthur Selby had steadily refused all her manuscripts lately, and the future was dreary enough

in her eyes. She felt that she was, in some way, the victim of a conspiracy, and that Arthur Selby was the arch-conspirator. She read and re-read the rejected manuscripts, and with each reading their beauties of style and their force of construction appeared to grow apace. Oh, if she could but find some publisher who cared just a little for true merit! She walked sadly to her office and attacked the pile of exchanges with her scissors.

Meantime, Marian was sad enough. She sat in the little library trying in vain to think. Lawson called in the evening, and although she essayed to be politely sociable, she was not like herself to him. She tried to sing when he asked it, but it was a dreary failure; her voice seemed to have partaken of her gloom: it had lost its charm.

When he had risen to go, she said to him:—

“There is a petition to the Governor in young Hempstead’s behalf, I have heard.”

“Yes, but it’s useless; the Governor won’t notice it,” he responded.

“Do you think so? Oh, I’d give any thing, every thing to have it done—to have the boy saved. I feel so sorry for him,” she exclaimed, her voice trembling sweetly.

It may have been much owing to Lawson’s peculiar frame of mind just then, but her words went to his heart like a cry of despair, so plaintive, so quaveringly

appealing that he stood and looked at her for a moment without speaking. She looked to him like a living but breathless statue of prayer.

"Do you care a great deal about this? Is there any great reason why you want the boy saved? Is it a very dear wish of yours?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she tremblingly cried, clasping her hands and putting them against her breast; "it is my very dearest wish now. It is every thing to me, every thing."

"Then it shall be done," he said, his voice heavy and positive. "Good-night."

He left her abruptly, striding out through the hall with a heavy, measured tread.

In some way she caught something more than hope from his voice and manner. It was as if he had shown her the key of the jail. A sense of relief took possession of her, and she sank into a chair as one who is weak from relaxation after great pain.

Lawson's apparent success in every thing he had undertaken served to assure her that if he willed the convicted boy's reprieve and the commutation of his sentence, he would have his way.

XVII.

DOWNS had one bad habit, which, however evil and ugly as an example, seemed in his case to have no growing tendency. It consisted of a matutinal pilgrimage to the nearest bar where a glass of whisky could be had for the price of ten cents. This one-before-breakfast sip was all the stimulant he would take in one day. Nothing could have induced him to leave off the habit or to increase it in any way.

"It seems to sorty clear up my head," he often remarked, "and then it stays clear for twenty-four hours. It's kind o' like windin' up a watch."

These early down-town visits often enabled him to bring to the tidy and quiet boarding-house of Mrs. O'Slaughtery some fresh bits of local news in advance of the morning journals. His round, red face and sparkling eyes had a way upon such occasions of supplementing to perfection the glibness of his tongue and the picturesqueness of his vocabulary.

"The town's in mournin', the flag on the court-house steeple is at half-mast, tickets to the hangin' are quoted at nominal prices, with no buyers, the jail is disconsolate, the gallus is a forlorn widder," he cried

as he beamed in upon the breakfast room, just as the rest of the boarders had got fairly seated. "Bet you can't guess what's happened."

"The la, Misther Downs, I can guess the first toime; I'll wager me coffee-pot against a pair of foine gloves," said the landlady, pausing to balance the shining silver urn in her plump hand.

"Done! Now, what's happened?" demanded Downs eagerly.

"Ye've been takin' just a drop more whisky 'an common, that's all, to be sure, Misther Downs."

The boarders promptly voted that Mrs. O'Slaughtery had won the gloves, against which the auctioneer stoutly but ineffectually protested.

"Won't you hear a feller explain?" he asked. "I have got news and just lots of it. Why the town's a-b'ilin' like a soda-water fountain, jest a-sizzlin' as it were."

"But ye'll not forget that the number of the gloves is six an' a half, an' the stoile six-button kid, medium tan color, sir."

"Possibly you folks don't want to hear the news anyhow—you'd rather joke along an' wait for the newspapers. Of course I don't care to force the statement onto you." Downs took his seat at the table, with a look as near that of offended dignity as his florid, genial face could assume.

"Now, my dear Misther Downs, if the gloves are too

expensive, don't think of 'em, please, but do till—tell us the news, please," said Mrs. O'Slaughtery very gently, and in her most insinuating tone.

Downs brightened.

"Well, the town's like a bumblebee's nest after a boy's been there; you never heard sich a-hummin' and a-stirrin'. Last night, sometime, while the jailer was asleep an' dreamin' of the delights of the comin' execution, that boy Hempstead got out an' jest nat'rally skipped."

"Is he gone? Did he escape entirely, are you sure?" demanded Milford, his lips pale and his whole face expressive of intense feeling.

"You're mighty right," said Downs; "he's clear gone; didn't leave a trace or a sign. His cell was unlocked and him gone, and that's all there is of it."

Milford made no response, but sat overcome with a rush of feeling that seemed to have swept a great load from his heart.

"Your beautiful speech has been cheated out of its result, Mr. Milford," said Downs, after the ejaculations and hasty comments had flashed around the table. "It looks like a shame."

"I'm sure Mither Milford needn't care at all," remarked Mrs. O'Slaughtery; "he's done his duty an' got his pay. Let the poor unfortunate lad go, an' good luck to 'm."

Milford ate very little breakfast; he was too im-

patient to be down in the street, where he could hear all and get confirmation of this news. As he walked toward his office he found himself a little nervous for fear that it might turn out a mere sensation, caused by some slight attempt at escape by the prisoner. It seemed too strangely good to be true, that Marian Wilton's self-condemnation should be ended so soon. Ah, how this will relieve her, he thought; for since the drive by the river he had been conscious of how keenly she would suffer under the belief that she had been an agent in fixing the fate of young Hempstead. This reflection had added a deeper color to the whole trouble. He could not bear that she should be loaded with even an imaginary part of the responsibility which had so nagged at his conscience.

Downs had scarcely exaggerated the excitement in the streets of Bankersville, as Milford soon discovered. It seems strange to have to record the fact that many persons behaved as though they had been cheated or had had some impending pleasure snatched away when it was ready to fall upon them. Men raved and swore or delivered themselves of sudden rancor by heaping abuse upon the head of the jailer.

Cool-minded persons, after giving the facts and surroundings some careful thought, confessed that it did look as if there might have been bribery and connivance, but really there was not a breath of legal evidence to that effect; and as the jailer had always been

considered a man of good character, the suspicion was throttled in its earliest stage, so far as any public expression went.

The jailer's story was not impossible in its terms, but there was an air of something unauthentic, rather than improbable, in it. Very few persons believed what he said, if believing excludes doubt, but nobody was willing to take the responsibility of attempting to develop to its highest power the suspicion he felt, or, in other words, to begin an investigation.

The sheriff used every means in his power to recapture the prisoner, but he could not discover even the faintest trace of his course. The flight had been as trackless as if it had been made through the upper air.

Under all the circumstances, Hempstead's escape could not fail to make a strange impression on Marian Wilton's mind, especially when the rumor came to her ears of a suspicion that the jailer had been bribed. Here was a chapter added to her experience as unexpected as it was contradictory in its effects. With the quick insight of a woman, she at once saw that Lawson, prompted by what she had said to him, had used some undue influence to free Hempstead. Nor did her vision stop at this, for a woman always understands a man who loves her. She swiftly comprehended that he probably had felt the value his act might have in connection with his suit for her hand. She blushed with humiliation and self-contempt at the

thought. Had he really understood her to mean that she wished a jail delivery? Could it be possible that she was now an accessory to a crime in the eyes of Chester Lawson? There was just enough of probability supporting her suspicion to make her quite miserable; and yet whenever she realized that the dreadful gallows, whose image had remained in her mind ever since she saw it, was cheated of its victim, it thrilled her with an exquisite pleasure. She felt quite willing to bear almost any thing for the sake of knowing that Milford would be delivered from the gloomily misgivings into which his fierce and terrible prosecution of Hempstead had cast him, but this could scarcely blunt the pang she felt at the possibility of her unguarded words having influenced Lawson to commit an actual crime. She was aware that she possessed a stronger control over the lover she did not love than over the one she did love, a secret discovered by many a woman, and it humiliated her to feel that she had exerted, even inadvertently, a power which, according to every dictate of delicacy and right, should have been left unused forever.

Miss Crabb rushed in to see her, as she always did when there was a sensation in Bankersville. The elements of the volatile editor and impatient author were not more notably developed in Miss Crabb than was that more womanly characteristic, the love of gossip. She was an overwhelming talker, and finding

Marian a good listener, she always came to the Wilton home heavily burdened with something to say. Her influence was good, perhaps; for, no matter how discouraged she chanced to be, she was never ill-natured, and if she now and then grew hysterical, it was hysteria of a light and laughing sort.

On this occasion Miss Crabb was in ecstasies. She did not know which contributed most to her delight: the fact that Hempstead had escaped or the discomfiture of the *Scar* editor on account of losing the opportunity to publish a blood-curdling description of the execution.

"I do think the whole thing is a special providence, Marian, a divine interposition in behalf of our sweet little city," she remarked with great warmth and quite amazing fluency. "Think of the Boston of Indiana—the Athens of the West—the Paris of the Wabash, being the scene of a vulgar, brutal execution by the gibbet! I'm just actually overjoyed—I can't help it. Talk about justice and the vindication of the law, why, nothing could be more demoralizing than such a scene as that would have been! I was just thinking last night that if I could do it I would go and let that boy out. Oh, you ought to see that *Scar* man's face! It looks a yard long. If his wife had died he wouldn't have taken it half so hard. It just does me good."

"But shouldn't you expect that the prisoner would

be recaptured?—you don't think he can escape wholly, do you?" asked Marian.

"Oh, he's gone, I guess; the sheriff is thoroughly bewildered, and there seems to be no clew whatever to the direction he took. He's running for his life, remember, and he'll run his best."

"I hope he will," said Marian, with a poor smile; "it would be horrible if they should retake him."

"Yes, it would; but I don't think they will, he's got too great a start," rejoined Miss Crabb, unfolding a sheet of writing-paper. "To change the subject," she went on, after a little pause; "I want to read you my latest poem. It seems good to me and I should like your candid opinion of it; you have such exquisite taste and I'm so apt to be partial and prejudiced when considering my own things. May I read it?"

Marian assented cordially enough, though just then she was in no mood for poetry.

"It's short," apologized the editor, "and that is in its favor, to begin with; moreover, I think it has a little bit of originality in it."

She read:

"Can any good song come out of the West?

Has the bard of the fields and the prairies been born?

Oh, who sings the wheat? and who has expressed

The music of grass and the rapture of corn?

"Is the lyrist of Nature a lad at his plow,

With his feet brown and bare and his straw hat all torn?

Or is it the bonny girl milking her cow

Shall trill us the score of the grass and the corn?

“ Ah, no matter who sings the song, so he be
Of the West, to the life of a Westerner born ;
A maid, or a lad, or a man strong and free
As the soul of the grass or the spirit of corn ! ”

“ I don't just like that closing phrase,” Miss Crabb remarked by way of comment ; “ it's good ; it's just what I want to say, but I'm afraid the humorists will take it up, and if they do, just imagine what they'll make of it ! Spirit of corn—corn-juice—essence of corn—whisky—ugh ! These humorists have grown to be a terror—all but Burdette, he's always kind—they are like hawks, they pounce on you unaware and catch you just when you're not expecting it. Would you let it alone so, if you were I ? ”

“ I should not care for them. It seems very pretty to me—I like it,” said Marian, frankly. “ It seems fresh and musical.”

“ Do you know what suggested it ? ” asked Miss Crabb ; and then, without waiting for an answer, she continued briskly : “ It was something Mrs. Goodword said the other evening in her sermon, something about the genius of the West being as free as the grass on the prairies and the corn in the fields. I came away with the thought ringing through my mind and it worried me till I wrote it.”

“ I haven't been at any of Mrs. Goodword's meetings,” said Marian, “ but I am going this evening. Are they interesting ? Is she a person of any ability ? ”

"Yes and no," responded the editor, knitting her brows and drawing down the corners of her large, flexible mouth; "she's sensational and crude, but then she has a peculiar fervor that is contagious or something—it affects you in spite of yourself. I don't just approve of her, and yet I can't, for the life of me, say why. She's not exactly vulgar—her voice is honest and sweet, her eyes clear and earnest, she has a fine presence, and all that; still I find a protest against her in my heart or mind somewhere, as if she were doing me some indirect and subtle injustice, or something. I don't know just how to express it."

"You are prejudiced against women-orators, perhaps," suggested Marian.

"No, I am not; I have thought of lecturing myself, or reading my poems. No, it's not any prejudice. It seems to lie deeper. I've thought of it a good deal. Sometimes I think it's the way she swings wide her arms and leans backward when she is saying something she wishes every body to hear, and then again I suspect that it's the long strides she makes when she walks to and fro on the platform. It's as if I approved of her in theory, but recoiled from her—very gently and vaguely—in practice."

"It is probably one of those inexplicable personal dislikes," said Marian, growing a little interested; "you know we have them sometimes so obscurely developed

that we can not understand their origin. Often they are unjust, too."

"No, but I like Mrs. Goodword personally; she has been in the office frequently and she's charming. No, the recoil is generated on the platform—in the pulpit. You must go and hear her; I think you'll feel just as I do about it."

Miss Crabb rose to go. Marian followed her to the gate to say, at last:

"If you hear—if any thing new happens—if you get any further word about Hempstead, let me know, won't you? It seems so strange that he could escape."

"All right, I'll keep you posted," responded the editor; "but don't forget Mrs. Goodword's meeting."

Lawson called that evening and walked with Marian to the church, which was but two squares distant from the house. She would have avoided him if it had been possible without rudeness, for just then he was of all the world the one person she could not meet and feel at peace with her conscience. Not that she admitted any guilt, on her part, in Lawson's crime, if he had really committed one—the qualms that beset her reached back to the fact that she had tacitly commissioned him to make some effort, right or wrong, for her sake. He would feel that she could not help recognizing the obligation he had placed her under.

He was in a very cheerful mood, and much to her relief, talked in a light way, without alluding to the subject she dreaded.

They arrived at the church rather early, but this gave them an opportunity to choose good seats from which they could have a full view of the proceedings. Marian felt that she had not come out of any better motive than a species of curiosity—"pious investigation," Lawson called it.

Mrs. Goodword came in after the auditorium had been crowded for sometime. A wide rustle, amounting almost to applause, greeted her appearance. She went directly to the platform upon which the pulpit stood, and as she ascended the two or three steps she began singing an "exhilarating hymn in a voice as rich as gold," as the newspapers reported next morning.

"I don't like her looks," said Lawson in a low tone. "She has a man-like manner which I'd call a swagger, if I dared, and her voice suggests a straining for effect; it's a poor business for a woman at best."

"You are hard on her—hard on us all, Mr. Lawson," remarked Marian.

Lawson was about to speak again when McGinnis, elbowing and zig-zagging his way along, reached the back of the young man's seat and leaning over whispered in his ear.

"Excuse me," said Lawson instantly, turning upon

Marian a suddenly excited face. "Excuse, me please ; a little matter of urgent business. I may not be able to return."

"Oh, pray don't think of me, I shall get on well enough," she responded. "I hope you have no bad news?" she involuntarily added, thinking of Hempstead.

"No," he replied, smiling and recovering his composure, "not so very bad. It could be a good deal worse."

He went away wondering why she had asked the question ; he was scarcely out of sight when Milford came and begged Marian's permission to sit in the vacant seat beside her. This was while the house seemed fairly to rock under the singing now taken up by hundreds of voices.

At least half the congregation consisted of people from the country, some of whom had come many miles to attend the great revival.

Ranged in a semicircle before the pulpit were the anxious seats, now fast filling with seekers after spiritual comfort.

At the end of the song Mrs. Goodword lifted her hand and prayed in a loud, resonant, almost masculine voice. Marian thought of what Miss Crabb had said, and there crept into her consciousness a shadowy sense of shame, or something akin to it ; it was as if she herself stood on the platform and prayed aloud, while

all the people kneeled or gazed. She could not keep from casting a glance at Milford. There was a look on his face which would have been pity if it had been less cold. She understood it. He shared Lawson's opinion of the spectacle.

When Mrs. Goodword began to address the congregation Marian tried to compose herself and listen, but in spite of all she could do she let her mind wander. How sweetly arose in her memory a vision of the first part of the quiet drive with Milford the other morning! She wondered if it could be as precious to him as it was to her.

The preacher began to fling out her arms and to pour forth a flood of exhortation, her voice rising and falling in strong undulations of persuasive, touchingly musical appeal. Then the mourners began to be heard crying out, and here and there in the crowd a voice shouted "Amen" or "Thank the Lord," while the whole mass seemed to be swaying to the palpitations of the exhortation. Marian gazed fixedly at the tall, strong figure of the enthusiastic speaker, watched her face, her excited gestures, her ungraceful attitudes, with a consciousness of objection in her heart somewhere, to being a part, even in so slight a degree, of this strange exhibition.

Presently five young men went upon the platform, and ranging themselves in a row, arm in arm, and facing the audience, sang the *Ninety and Nine* with

great power. How almost weirdly beseeching Mrs. Goodword's voice now sounded in the midst of that musical din! She grew ecstatic in gesture and expression, and strode back and forth in front of the row of singers, calling loudly and fervently on sinners to repent before it should be everlastingly too late.

"Do you care very much about this sort of thing?" Milford inquired suddenly, as the noise, doubled and trebled by added voices, became next to deafening. Many people were standing in the seats gazing over the heads of others in front of them.

"Do you care for this? does it interest you a great deal?" Milford added.

"I don't know," she answered; "I think it is strange, almost weird."

Some one began to shout—it was a thin, sharp, quavering voice. Milford recognized it at once.

How well he remembered its appeal to him, once upon a time, before young Hempstead's trial. He looked and saw, what the cry had led him to expect, a woman with upturned face and out-stretched arms, frantically exhilarated with the draught of excitement imbibed from the exhortation, the singing and the praying. It was poor old Mrs. Hempstead, but the voice was more than hers, it seemed to, Milford—a voice that filled the universe and suggested an infinitude of strange shadowy doubts. He was an orthodox Presbyterian, and he held in highest venera-

tion all the ordinances and all the sacred traditions of his church, and yet he was liberal, he thought, to a degree which would keep undue prejudice out of his mind in the presence of any advanced methods of Christian work. Mrs. Goodword's peculiar eloquence and her strange mesmeric effect upon those weaker than she, suggested a fascination too subtle and secret to be felt as wholly good, he feared; then her voice; the very voice it was of one who seeks to fascinate rather than to convince, to frighten rather than to persuade. He watched the trembling, pallid subjects of her influence, as they writhed under the ecstatic torture she inflicted, and he dared not judge whether it was really the spirit of Christ or the spirit of ambitious experiment he saw at work. All the time the voice of Mrs. Hempstead prevailed over the strange clamor of the meeting:—"Praise the Lord! Glory, glory, glory!" it cried, its singular tone vibrating through the din with thrilling distinctness. "Glory! Oh, glory, hallelujah! I prayed an' my prayer was heard, my boy is safe, the good Lord delivered him from death! Glory, glory! Oh, I will praise Him, praise Him, all my life-time! I am happy forever and forever! Glory, glory, glory!" she went on.

"Let us go home," said Milford, "this is no place for you, Marian."

"Oh, I prayed for my poor boy! I prayed the Lord to open the jail an' let him out, an' He done it, He

done it, blessed forever be His name!" rang out the thin, ecstatic cry again.

"Who is that? Who—that is—is that his mother?" exclaimed Marian, as she caught the strange words.

"Yes; she is over-wrought, she should be taken away," said Milford. "Come, Marian, come with me."

She rose and took his arm. No one noticed them as they made their way out of the crowd and clamor into the sweet, cool night. Slowly the noise softened down as they walked toward her home. The blessing of a cloudless sky, with its pale moon and silver stars, hovered over the little city. The blessing of a deep peace crept into the hearts of the two, as the last murmur of the revival died out. They reached the gate, and then as if recollecting that they had scarcely spoken on the way, they looked at each other and smiled. He opened the gate and let her go through, but in some way he caught her hand, so that she must needs turn round and smile at him again over the little wicker-work barrier.

"After all, Marian," he murmured, with a touch of man's selfishness and conceit in his voice, "after all, a woman can not be an orator in the noblest degree."

"All women can not be orators," she quickly responded, "nor can all men. Few are chosen, even if many are called. You must not take one or two instances to prove a rule."

"Oh, a woman is always a woman," he gently

insisted, still holding her firm, strong little hand across the gate; "and there is something she loses under a test like that—that subtle charm, that elect, exclusive grace of body and soul, worshiped, adored by all good men—is it not so?" She tried to release herself. He did not let her go, taking quick advantage of her effort by holding her hand all the faster.

"In your own heart, Marian, you have already answered my question," he gravely said, leaning far over the gate. "Women are good for all that home and love can rightfully mean or claim."

"I'd better go in, then, for this night air isn't exactly home," she replied, giving another fruitless pull to release the hand he held so close.

"But it's the atmosphere of love, Marian, isn't it?—you love me, don't you? Say yes, say you do——"

He reached forth his other hand and drew her to him, despite her silent little struggle, and there in the sky light, and star light, and heaven light he did as lovers have done ever since front gates were invented: kissed her good night, and good morning, and good always, and ever.

XVIII.

AS Milford walked back to his room, filled with the deep strange joy of love, he passed by the large French-glass window of McGinnis's office. Within he saw the banker and Lawson sitting with their heads close together, evidently in earnest consultation. He had been suspecting lately that financial affairs were not just as Lawson had planned for them to be, and now the thought flashed across his mind that probably the frequent fluctuations in the Chicago market lately had brought calamity to the two great Bankersville speculators. Indeed, to his imagination there was something in the attitudes and the expression of the men suggestive of great mental strain, as if they were grappling with some stupendous threat of chance. It was only a glimpse through the clear glass between heavy curtains, a glimpse of rather gaudy upholstery and a rich carpet, a covered walnut desk, and the two men—the thin, nervous face of McGinnis, pale and set, the heavy features of Lawson, red and almost stolid, but it was strangely expressive of evil of some sort, as Milford's mind chanced to interpret it.

He went up into his own office to have a smoke and dream awhile before retiring for the night. His thoughts did not dwell long on McGinnis and Lawson; they vibrated between the tender joy of knowing that Marian loved him and the bright future that his book's great success was promising to him. It was but natural that he should look forward now with a color of the rose clinging to every thing his vision could reach; but the provincial person, the Westerner, say, or the Southerner, and especially the provincial artist, novelist, or poet, is apt to use his imagination or, perhaps, his fancy in every thing, as if his isolated, cramped and realistic life, calling for some relief, could find unlimited delight in a strained idealism, and Milford felt possibilities in his coming career far greater than any experienced *litterateur* of Boston or New York would have thought it advisable to expect. He had more courage and more confidence, no doubt, for the very reason that the business aspect of his literary ventures troubled him little. What with the money he would soon get from the pine lands of his father's estate and a small sum laid up from his legal earnings, he felt that he might safely marry Marian and begin a new life with every prospect of happiness. Here is the provincial's advantage over the metropolitan—freedom from the restraint of social necessity as well as exemption from the exactions of a time-serving taste—immunities dear to creative genius. Burns and Jasmin and Theocritus and Sappho and

Mistral are types, in a certain degree, by which the provincial tendencies of literary ambition may be measured, just as Millet is a standard of the stature of provincial art: aspiration in its healthiest form. Everywhere provincial life has, within certain limitation of variation, the same influence upon the human mind and soul. Who but the provincial gives himself up wholly to his imagination and dwells in an ideal world? Who but the provincial comes to verily believe that his art, or his love, or his religion is the whole of life? Who but the provincial regards fame as something supremely precious, not for the power of it, not for its glory in the vulgar and worldly view, but for the high, serene ecstasy it brings to the soul? Who but the provincial wraps himself in dreams, as in a cocoon, when the mood is on, and lives the very life of romance? It is all as it should be. Life in the great cities, where love of culture takes the place of more subtle aspiration and where the aspects of human nature are so varied and so near the observer's eye that there is no perspective, no color, naturally develops a microscopic vision and generates an analytical spirit, like that of Balzac and his imitators, in literature and art. But out in the provinces, or prairies, which means the same, where space is wide and instances are few in every line of experience, romance, in all its forms, assaults the imagination and takes it captive. It is the provincial who can lend his whole being to a fancy and

throw into a dream the substance as well as the essence of his life. Milford was happy, and the future seemed to him a vast sphere of serene triumph. He was deep in his reverie when Lawson entered, but he looked up immediately, wondering what had brought his partner in at such an hour, for Lawson had not been in the office much of late.

If Milford expected to see some mark of excitement in Lawson's face he was disappointed, for the young man was smiling cheerfully and began whistling a lively snatch from one of the revival tunes. These tunes, indeed, were on every body's lips.

"Hello," he exclaimed, taking a chair near Milford; "give me a cigar; seeing you smoking so luxuriously makes me hungry for one. Where've you been? I saw no light in here when I passed sometime ago."

"I went to the Goodword meeting," said Milford, producing his cigar-case. "I dropped in here to rest after the excitement."

"I went, but had to come away on account of a matter of business with McGinnis," remarked Lawson, selecting a cigar. "That woman is a palpable fraud, a mere adventuress, I'll bet my head on it. She should be suppressed. Think of a fellow's mother or wife or sister going on like that. Bah!"

"She has power, I should say," Milford rejoined. "I never have seen another audience so stirred."

"Not much real power; it's mostly novelty; the

effect of seeing a woman up there, before a vast crowd of people, bawling about heaven and hell, is enough to stir a weak person's blood; and most persons are weak, you know. I call it obtaining religion under false pretense, or rather under duress, to get it by means of such a holy terror of exhortation, of howling mourners, of furious singers and such a chorus of hand-clappers abetted by that woman's blood-curdling hell-pictures. It's a wonder that some of those excited wretches don't go hopelessly insane—raving crazy."

"They are crazy for the time they are under the spell of her personal influence, I suppose," said Milford.

"Yes, it's something of the sort. All this great power of oratory is mere animal force—physical charm."

"I don't think so," said Milford.

"Well, it's so, whether you think so or not. It's so with actors, orators, lecturers and singers. Don't you know that Litta, our western prima donna, had the charmingest voice that the world ever heard? And yet, poor girl, she could not fairly succeed because she was not beautiful. Now Mrs. Goodword is a magnificent animal, a little coarse, but that's all the better on the platform, with a voice like a silver calliope and a manner crudely but tellingly artistic; and it's no secret to me how she sets the country wild wherever she goes."

"Litta was beautiful beside a creature like that you portray, but I do not think you do Mrs. Goodword justice," said Milford. "Her subject is a grand one and she evidently feels the importance of her work—she is sincere, and sincerity is the secret of personal force."

"Milford, you know better," exclaimed Lawson with a laugh; "take your own experience. Were you wholly sincere in your terrible, almost brutal speech against young Hempstead? I never have heard more effective oratory than that was, and you can't say your conscience thoroughly approved the means you used."

"Thank you," exclaimed Milford. "I couldn't think of doubting your sincerity now. But there was a secret spring to my enthusiasm on that occasion."

"I know the secret and wish you great joy," Lawson replied, a strange softness in his voice. "It must be a great relief to you to know that Hempstead has escaped."

"Yes, it is; and yet I suppose one ought not to indulge such a feeling. I'm going to quit the practice of the law; legal methods of administering justice are harassing to one's sense of human sympathy, they are so many hot irons to one's conscience. I would rather hew wood and draw water."

"Well, you can withdraw from the practice with full knowledge of having been successful in it, so far as

you have gone," remarked Lawson, with suave complacency. After a moment's silence, he uttered a little, light laugh and added: "After all it wasn't any harm to you the way I pushed myself into partnership with you. It is real funny to think of though, isn't it? We've both prospered by it. Seems like a long time ago, don't it? Well, we've crowded a good deal into life since then; I have, at least. Humph! what strange luck I've had. But then I felt that I should have it. Destiny was upon me; as Napoleon would have said: 'The God of Luck attended me.'"

"You certainly have been of great service to me," said Milford, with cordial promptness, "and I shall always feel that I owe you a great debt."

"Oh, no, no, not at all. I am not to be thanked for my 'cheek' and luck. It makes me laugh to think upon what preposterous freaks of chance I have won my way. You deserve a thousand times more credit than I—I am a foot-ball of luck."

"I have been fortunate, too," said Milford, "very fortunate, I know."

"Yes, yes, you have drawn the best prize in life's lottery," rejoined Lawson, in a tone meant to be cheerful and sympathetic, but somehow his voice faltered strangely. He got up and went to a window, then turned about and came back. "It's all chance, anyway, and we are fools for making much effort. I am inclined to think that evil and good are congenital

infections and must have their time to generate and mature. I haven't had a thing to do with my career; it is the result of a chance hereditament. In me have centered many long lines of hap-hazard, so to speak. I've had no control. I deserve neither praise nor blame. The leavens were in me, and they have fermented, that's all."

Milford looked into Lawson's face and fancied he saw under its half cynical mask the glow and turmoil of passion and desperation. The thought that he had never found out any thing whatever about Lawson's family, his past life or former place of residence was suddenly pointed and colored by what had just been said. On the moment's impulse he asked :

"Are you in trouble, Lawson?"

Lawson's face flushed quickly, but he laughed and exclaimed :

"Why, yes, come to think of it, I am." He glanced hurriedly at his watch and added : "I've got to go to Chicago on the eleven-five train and I forgot to telegraph for a berth in the sleeper, and the chance is that I shall get no rest to-night."

"Blame your ancestors," remarked Milford, rising to go. "It is their fault."

"Yes, I do. I damn them backward to the ninety-and-ninth generation," Lawson responded, with bitter levity. "I haven't a drop of honest, innocent blood in my veins and never have had. Good-night." He

held out his hand and Milford took it, remarking as he did so :

“ You are in a mood to-night ; have the markets been refractory ? Good luck to you. Good-night.”

“ If you see—when you go—well, I guess I’ll not say it, let it go as it is—good-night and a happy world, old fellow !”

They parted. Then, and not till then, did the strangeness of Lawson’s words and actions assert in Milford’s mind the significance it really bore. The parting now seemed undoubtedly final, eternal. He did not understand why this significance had escaped him while the conversation was going on.

It was but a momentary impression, however, and he flung it off as he walked to his room, turning his thoughts back to the sweet love-dream and the rosy atmosphere of the reverie from which Lawson had called him.

Next morning McGinnis came to the law office and asked for Lawson, and, when told that he had gone to Chicago, seemed surprised, but made no comment. This set Milford to thinking again of Lawson’s strange behavior at their parting. The impression grew in his mind that some disaster, most probably financial, had fallen, and that his partner had absconded. After thinking it over throughout the day, he went to McGinnis’s office, hoping he would be able to learn something further, but the banker was not in : he had

gone North on a late morning train, the clerk said, and would be home to-morrow evening. Milford felt at times as if he ought to do something, he hardly knew what, to ascertain the truth in regard to Lawson's financial relations; but when he came to consider the thought in connection with the meager foundation of facts in his possession, upon which to base even a suspicion, he knew that he must rest silent until the worst came, as, according to his feelings, come it must, very soon.

That very day he had a letter from his publishers, asking him to go into the South and write a novel.

"We want it written 'on the spot,' as artists say, and you must put the very South itself into it, barring politics," went on the rather free-and-easy epistle. It closed as follows: "How soon can we expect to see the MS.? Can we count on having it by March 1st? You have taken the public by storm. We congratulate you."

With this letter in his hand, Milford called on Marian, eager to have her share with him the pleasure it brought.

"Suppose we give up the thought of being lawyers and orators and set our ambition on this quieter, sweeter line of life?" he ventured boldly, as he gave the volume of Kent's Commentaries a gentle push aside, and spread the letter out on the table in its place.

"Let's put our fancy, our imagination and our highest purpose into doing what this letter asks."

She read in silence, then looked up into his face.

"Then you did write the new novel that has been so highly praised? Miss Crabb said so, but I could not believe it," she exclaimed. "I have just read it, and—and—I don't like it a bit."

"Then I deny doing it," he said, "for you must like every thing I do."

"But did you write it?" she asked, as if afraid he would say no. "Did you?"

"If you like it, I wrote it; if you don't like it, some other wretched fellow who is tired of the law, and court-houses, and jails, and gibbets, is the author," he responded, a deep feeling gathering in his voice. "And it is for you to say now, Marian, what shall be my answer to this letter, and what shall be my whole future."

"That puts a too heavy responsibility on me," she said, "I can't accept it."

Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes would not seek his.

"Then suppose we divide it," he murmured; "you decide for me and I'll decide for you."

She looked up quickly now, with a radiant smile and just a little toss of her head.

"You are something of a lawyer yet," she exclaimed, "but I am not so easily caught."

He laughed.

"Oh, well then, do as women always do," he rejoined, "have your own way about every thing. I'll trust you to do about right. But what do you think of the letter?"

"The chirography is miserably scrawling and unsightly."

"But seriously? The question is a grave one. I am in love with literature, but I will give it up—"

"Not if you're in love with it," she interrupted; "love is not a thing to be cast off like a garment."

"True, but my love for you, Marian, can destroy even my life."

He put his hand on hers and the letter was underneath. The window was open, and they heard the old water-mill growling and grumbling away down by the Wabash. She did not snatch away her hand, but there was a far-off hint of willfulness in her voice as she said:

"But you're not to make fun of women in your next story: I don't like that; it isn't just."

"And you are not to oppose my scheme for the co-education of the sexes in the college," she gravely went on. "And if your next book fails, you are to return at once to the practice of the law."

"I think it would be so charming to have your help in writing this new story," he persisted, passing her conditions by, and moving his chair nearer to hers. "I

think you could keep out all those objectionable things, and then, and then—" his voice deepened and shook with the intensity of his feeling ; "you will be a new and inexhaustible inspiration, filling my creations with the very soul of all that is high and sweet, and pure and good. Come with me and make my life an idyl!"

"Upon one further condition," she said, looking shyly sidewise at him, still smiling half willfully : "If I get tired of literature, I am to return to Kent and Blackstone."

"Yes, yes, when you get tired, Marian ; but that will be when you are tired of me.

"I am the most fortunate and the happiest man in all the world," he continued, after a short pause during which the rumbling of the distant mill was again audible. "With your love to glorify my life and with freedom from the worry of a detestable profession——"

She put a hand on his lips.

"Don't say that," she cried ; "I haven't quite given it up yet—I may not give it up at all ; it has been a precious, fascinating ambition. I can not be happy looking forward to the life of a little old woman."

"My wife will never be a little old woman," he said, in the tone of one making a sacred oath. "Who that loves and is loved is always young and beautiful, is always grand and strong."

Just then a farm wagon, one of those big vehicles

used for hauling corn, wheat and other country produce to town, but also turned at need to serve the purposes of a carriage or coach, went rattling along the street, returning to the country loaded with some young men and women who were going home from one of Mrs. Goodword's meetings. The spirit of the revival was upon them and they were singing in loud, clear voices :

“ Love is the sweetest bud that blows,
Its beauties never die,
On earth among the saints it grows
And blossoms in the sky.”

The clash and clack and rattle of the great vehicle and the clarion strains of the strong, healthy voices reminded the listeners of what a power Mrs. Goodword was wielding—it was the chariot of her influence passing by. After all, her labors had not been in vain.

XIX.

WHEN the telegraphic dispatch came to Bankersville announcing that McGinnis, the banker, had committed suicide in Chicago, the news flashed over the town almost instantaneously. The thrilling fact without any details was all that could be found out for some time; but at length a rumor got abroad of financial complications, then frauds were discovered, misappropriation of funds, alterations of bank accounts, mutilation of books. Men began to look uneasily at one another as they walked swiftly to and fro from place to place in search of information, for in many a breast there had rested for some time a half-formed fear that under the surface of Bankersville's apparent prosperity lay the germ of destruction.

The banks at first tried to cover up the facts, hoping to avoid a crash, but early on the morning following the announcement of the suicide, a run was begun on all of them by depositors, and the doors of all but one promptly closed. A scene followed, or rather a succession of scenes, quite beyond description. It was as if some devil's rival of Mrs. Goodword had begun a counter excitement, which by its first impulse had in-

gulfed the town. Throngs of men and women, old, young, middle-aged, richly clad, poorly clad, some in tatters, all wild, crying, cursing, shouting, gesticulating, besieged the closed doors of the banks, struggling, frothing, demanding, beseeching, frantic as a herd of wild cattle when surrounded by wolves.

Among those who, though gravely affected by the situation, kept calm and cool-headed, the question: Where is Lawson? was circulated under their breath; for if he, too, had been into these frauds, if he, too, had failed, then were they ruined indeed. Two of their number, men of energy and experience, were sent forthwith to Chicago to learn the particulars, for it was in Chicago and not in Bankersville that the secrets were hidden. This pains was needless, however, as within the next few hours all was made public. Lawson was the king culprit; the colossal schemes by which the entire financial structure of Bankersville had been wrecked were all his. Poor McGinnis had been a mere tool, so they said, now that the banker was dead. We never think of fairness in such cases; the dead go free, the living must bear all the load. Perhaps the spirit of this is right, for so long as the dead leave nothing but their good behind, evil does not accumulate beyond our power to bear it; but what would become of us if the dead all left us their wrongdoings as a constantly increasing deposit added to our own stores of sin and shame? What a world this

would be now if the corruption of men's souls had not been, from the dawn of time, buried with their corrupt bodies!

Where is Lawson? The question grew more and more insistent, until it came to be uttered like a curse. There was a time when, if he could have been found, he would have been torn to pieces by maddened men who had trusted their fortunes in his hands.

Two or three days elapsed, each successive hour disclosing new and distressing features of the predicament, but not a hint of Lawson's whereabouts could be obtained.

The one bank which had steered clear of speculation, and other entangling financial webs, stemmed the panic without much trouble, and it was in this bank that Milford had his deposit, consequently he lost little by the frauds and recklessness of his partner; but his good luck brought him trouble quite as bitter as a total wreck of his little fortune could have done. It was the most natural thing in the world for people to come to him for news of Lawson and to feel angry when he could give them none.

"He's as deep in the mud as Lawson is in the mire," they began to say; and when it became pretty generally known that his deposit was safe, a great cry arose against him.

All kinds of rumors got afloat as to his participation in Lawson's ruinous schemes of speculation. One

asserted that he had a vast sum of money in the undisturbed bank as his part of the profit from all those fraudulent transactions; another alleged that he was getting ready to leave the country; and still another charged him with a knowledge of Lawson's whereabouts. Men came to him in their desperation with insulting words and threatening gestures, charging him with complicity in the wrecking of their hopes and the ruin of their fortunes. Women reproached him in the most bitter and distressing ways. In fact it was a reign of terror for a whole week before people began to see with their eyes and hear with their ears, instead of being led deaf and blind by passion; but the calm was bitterer than the storm. Few persons in Bankersville had escaped loss; the financial tissue of the town was honey-combed with the track of the bolt, so to speak, leaving properties and securities in a deplorable state of weakness and doubt. Some of the leading business men were ruined and forced to assign; but the most pathetic feature of the situation was the fact that many poor people had lost the little they had laid up against the coming winter when they could not earn much. There were special instances of the most heart-rending nature, but a picture of them could serve no purpose here. Wherever a bank has failed, or a man of great influence in financial circles has proved recreant to the trust reposed in him, such instances have been observed. Usually, as in the case

of Bankersville, the gambling mania is the cause of these local cataclysms, and many of the keenest sufferers are individuals who have themselves rested wholly unaware of the danger up to the very moment when the bolt fell. But, on the other hand, the great mass of the injured is all the more furious because it has known all the time that it was playing with fire and has been half expecting to be burned. Those who play with the beautiful, iridescent bubble called a bucket-shop, know that sooner or later that fascinating film must burst, letting go the subtle essence of financial ruin with which it is distended; still they play on, hoping to be able to realize their fortune of gold and get away before the catastrophe comes, leaving others to reap the death they have escaped. The celebrated gambling centers of Europe are mere pigmies in their influence beside the bucket-shops of any middle Western state.

When it had been ascertained that, directly or indirectly, Lawson was responsible for the ruin of Bankersville's credit, honor and exchequer, men put their heads together to bring him to justice, and the court lent its aid. Indictments were found against him by the grand jury of the county. Detectives were employed, even some of Pinkerton's, and a systematic effort was made to track him down. An association of citizens offered a large reward for his capture, and the county commissioners did likewise.

It did not particularly interest Bankersville when it came to light that Lawson had been one of the chief agents in perfecting and carrying out the scheme by which the markets of the East had been flooded with illegal Indiana Township bonds, but it may have made the detectives all the more alert and eager when several counties joined in advertising additional rewards on this account.

Milford, who felt that he must firmly face the suspicion which, on account of his partnership with Lawson, had so unjustly arisen, remained in his office day after day, and met as best he could whatever came up. His situation was a distressing one under all the circumstances, and it required all his nerve, presence of mind and moral fortitude to preserve his own dignity and self-respect, and at the same time avoid the troubles continually provoked by the bitter feeling of those who had suffered so deeply at Lawson's hands. At any moment during office hours he might expect some one to come in and subject him to the most harassing catechism touching what he knew and what he did not know in connection with Lawson's affairs. Some persons were brutal, some sly and cunning, others tearful, and yet others pathetically doleful in their way of approaching him. He would have shut up his office and gone away, had not his pride forbidden it. Even Downs and Mrs. O'Slaughtery brought to him the burden of their great trouble, for they were

compelled to postpone their wedding to an indefinite day on account of having lost the little money they had hoarded up.

"He was a very Satan of a mane mon, yer partner, Misther Milford, an' ye ought to be ashamed of 'im," cried the inconsolable landlady. "But thin ye're not at all to blame, Misther Milford, not at all; only I don't see how ye iver bore the loikes of 'im, so I don't. He always had a shape-thayfe grin on his great beefy face, an' I just thought all the toime: there's a snakin', undermoining scalawag for ye."

"Well, why didn't you warn Mr. Milford, if you know'd it?" Downs demanded, almost petulantly. "If I'd 'a dremp o' such a thing you better bet I'd 'a told him quick."

"Yis, yis, if ye'd 'a draymed o' any thing whativer, but thin ye didn't at all; ye niver do see any thing till ye've gone past it altogether an' happen to look back," she cried. "Ye're a very noice mon, ye are, to be talkin' about what ye'd 'a done whin ye niver was known to do any thing but jist jabber an' blow about what you would 'a done if ye'd 'a happened to 'a thought of it!" She was too much excited to correct her pronunciation or smooth down her brogue.

Downs laughed indulgently, giving her the half-deprecating, half-admiring look which some parents accord to spoiled children.

"Ah, yes, Mrs. O'Slaughtery," he remarked, with

raised eyebrows and a beseeching smile, his whole face beaming with a kind of comic regret and pathos; "if every body could be like you this world 'd be different, very different indeed."

Milford bore every thing with a commendable degree of philosophic calmness, even the comments and suggestions printed editorially in the *Scar*. That Ishmaelitish newspaper, not being able to solve the mystery of the appearance and disappearance of the strange old man who had been so familiar with Lawson, now turned the stream of its vituperation upon Milford, with a malignancy as subtle as it was abominable. Here are a few characteristic samples of the *Scar's* shorter paragraphs:

"Scratch a rebel and you'll soon find a scoundrel."

"A man who will betray his country will betray his friends."

"Bankersville has hugged vipers and got stung."

"The still sow drinks the swill. We dare say that the absconder, Lawson, left a *silent partner* behind."

"How could Lawson do what he has done without a confidential friend? Can't the people of Bankersville see an inch before their noses?"

Every body understood these allusions, although Milford's name was not used. Of course the *Scar*, as a Western journal, no matter how degenerate and fallen, must give a humorous turn to its pet theme, now and then.

"The bucket-shop racket," it remarked, with a complacency that was visible in the type. "The bucket-shop racket has ceased in Bankersville, and most of us are sucking our burned fingers during such time as we are not lifting our hats to the 'honnahble gentleman, sah,' who set up the job on us. We can't afford to stone fools now, for in that case every skull in Bankersville would have a donnick bouncing off it."

During the time that the excitement was at its flood, Milford was called upon by one of the committee appointed to solicit money to aid in the capture of Lawson. This was a square-set, stout, bald-headed man, whose face was red, and whose eyes were as keen as those of a fox.

"I have called to ask you to subscribe to our fund for the apprehension of Chester Lawson," he blurted, extending a paper toward Milford. "We think it's a matter that every body is interested in, and all should bear a part of the expense. Put down whatever you can afford, Mr. Milford."

The proposition was so unexpected that it astounded Milford, and for a moment he was blank and silent.

"I can not take any part in this movement, sir," he presently found voice to say. "I should think you might have spared me the occasion to—to——"

"You don't mean to say you won't give any thing?" the committee-man interrupted, almost gruffly. "You can't afford to put yourself in *that* attitude."

"I beg to be the judge of what attitude I dare assume," Milford coldly and precisely remarked; "and I certainly mean that I will have nothing whatever to do with your subscription."

"Well, I'll be dumb'd eternally, Mr. Milford," blustered the old gentleman, spitefully refolding his paper; "I never would have thought it! They said it was so, but I didn't listen to it, I couldn't believe it."

"Said what? Couldn't believe what?" demanded Milford, rising from his seat and bending a look of terrible anger on the face of his visitor.

"Oh, I've got no quarrel with you, Mr. Milford; if you refuse, that's all I've got to know; but I'd think, under all the circumstances——"

"What circumstances?"

"Well, there's been a good deal said, and you're his partner, and then you were a rebel, and——"

"Go right out of this room," thundered Milford. "Out with you!"

"Shall I lead you out by the ear?" he added, making a step toward the slowly retreating committee-man and lifting his hand with the thumb and forefinger close together. The man retired.

This incident was quickly circulated through the streets of Bankersville, gaining a little touch of additional sinister import with each telling. Milford regretted, almost instantly, his hasty action, but there

was no way in which he could modify its effect. He had many and warm friends, but just now they were too much absorbed in their own losses, present or prospective, or too much affected by the common excitement, to stop and make an effort to set the public mind right upon a personal question.

Of course this state of things could not last. The citizens of Bankersville were for the most part worthy, honorable, fair-minded, and it was but a matter of time when they would resume a just equilibrium of judgment; but this was not very consoling to Milford, as day after day he was subjected to annoyances which could not have been borne under any different circumstances.

The *Scar* kept up its assaults, growing more facetious and more bold as popular rumor aided its purpose, and the committee redoubled the efforts for Lawson's capture.

"They're going to git that man Lawson," said Downs, "if he's on the top of earth. They're a-rakin' the whole continent with a fine-tooth comb, an' a-reachin' for 'im from long taw in every direction. If they do git 'im he's a gone goslin', an' don't you forgit it."

"Do you mean that he would be——"

"Lynched?" interrupted Downs, taking the word from Milford's mouth. "Yes, sir-ee, that he would, an' he ought to be; he's worse'n a murderer; he's

worse'n any thing; he lost me seven hundred and forty-odd dollars and thirty-five cents, dern 'im!"

"Mercy, and yis; besides, he got away wid nearly foive hundred of moine, the villain!" chimed in Mrs. O'Slaughtery, "an' I hope he'll be stritched as high as a stayple."

Milford found that many persons in Bankersville entertained the views thus expressed, and it at length became fixed in his mind that if Lawson were captured and brought back, he would be in great danger of falling a victim to "lynch law." It seemed that this revengeful feeling grew apace with the constantly increasing probability that Lawson had found some safe retreat.

At last the newspapers asserted, and there was no room left to doubt, that the criminal was in a certain city of Canada, a paradise of a class of malefactors absconding from the United States; and it would follow, of course, that, on account of the imperfect international extradition treaty, his arrest would be impossible, or, at least, futile.

It was a great relief to Milford, despite his consciousness of the demand of justice, to think that Lawson would not be brought back. He felt that in the event of an extreme act of mob violence, the great public crime would work more harm than would Lawson's escape from punishment. Scarcely had the public become somewhat reconciled to this phase of the situa-

tion, however, when one morning it was flashed over the wires to the associated press that Chester Lawson, the defaulter, swindler and forger, had been found and arrested in a small village of Michigan. This gave peculiar emphasis to public feeling, as the desire for revenge leaped anew in many hearts.

XX.

MARIAN was passing through this exciting episode of Bankersville history in a state of mind far from comfortable. Without understanding its true spirit and import, she was conscious of the ill feeling existing in the community against Milford, on account of his partnership with Lawson, and she saw with alarm that her father was greatly affected.

Miss Crabb brought all the news to the house, her volatile renderings often lending to certain phases of the situation a highly colored, if not exaggerated effect. She remained a warm defender of Milford, however, throughout the period of confusion and distress, bringing the whole power of her tongue and her pen to his aid. It was a part of her creed that the world persecutes literary people for mere persecution's sake, and she for one felt bound to strike back. She was loyal to her friends, and though she admitted the enormity of Lawson's crimes, she could not keep from her memory the many kind turns he had done for her just at the times when she most needed a friend. Nor was Miss Crabb's attitude in this regard an isolated one; the recipients of favors at Lawson's hands were

not few or without influence in Bankersville. Many a good person, even while the popular clamor made any public expression of sympathy with the great culprit too dangerous to be risked, secretly felt an indescribable interest in him and fervently prayed that he might escape the vengeance of the law. Indeed it is strange how deep and insistent is the under swell of sympathy for this or that criminal, in a community where on the surface nothing but an almost unreasoning and quite vindictive and revengeful spirit is observable.

It is not doubted by those who have had wide opportunities to study the subject, that very frequently men have been lynched by a crowd of persons, many of whom were inwardly protesting while outwardly they were the most clamorous of all for the life of the victim. In other words the mob, no matter how great its numbers, or how respectable the individual members of it, never represents the deep, honest, earnest feelings of a community. Riots and tumultuous acts of violence in the name of law and order are always the expression of a superficial public feeling induced by the dangerous stimulus of brute passion. Usually it happens, in the case of any dangerous demonstration by a greatly excited body of men, that unless the way is open directly to violent and precipitate action at the supreme moment, a wave of the under swell gets to the surface and the excitement subsides.

After the terrible scenes of tumult and rage and agony had softened down a great deal in Bankersville, and people had begun to shape their lines to the new order of things, there was not a little self-blame uttered by many of the best citizens, whose consciences hurt them on account of certain profits they had from time to time reaped in Lawson's bucket-shop. What they had been wont to call *dealing* in wheat and corn, and pork and lard, they now roundly denounced as gambling of the vilest order. Of course, no individual felt bound to particularize at all; the remarks were of the most general nature and were meant to suit the collective body of Bankersville trespassers. This was a concession to self-love, if not self-respect, which was not recognized by the pulpit orators of the stricken little city, who took occasion to preach fearlessly upon the evils of a fast, money-hunting life, and to animadvert on the dreadful disintegration of moral fiber made evident by recent disclosures. The people were plainly told that from sowing the wind they had come to reaping the whirlwind, and that they had no one to blame but themselves. Unpalatable as this wholesome doctrine certainly was to many, it nevertheless had the effect of setting thoughtful people in the way of recovering that philosophical equipoise out of which would come sane views of the situation and the ability to profit by a sad and bitter experience. Slowly but surely the judgment of a majority in any com-

munity will regulate itself by the dictates of righteousness and set a proper estimate on the influences which have induced a given state of affairs. But the public mind is quite as inscrutable as the individual mind, and often changes as suddenly. The news that Lawson had been captured and would be brought to Bankersville in the hands of the successful detectives, set the town wild again. Business was suspended in a great degree in order to discuss the event, and men rushed together in groups that soon swelled into crowds. The second excitement seemed to bid fair to be more dangerous than the first. It was like one of those dreadful and unexpected relapses in sickness, whereby the symptoms of the disease return in an aggravated form.

"Oh, *have* you heard the news?" demanded Miss Crabb, with something more than her usual impetuosity. She was breathless and flurried, and she dropped into a chair with her hands spread out and extended toward Marian: palms uppermost, her shoulders raised, and her chin drawn back. "They have come with Mr. Lawson, and he's in jail; and oh, there's such a crowd down there, and such wild excitement and horrid talk! I do think men are the most brutal things, don't you? They're going to lynch him, Marian, I just know they are! They are swearing awfully and howling like wolves and squeezing themselves all up together into a solid mass around the jail.

Some are trying to quiet the rest and save him ; others are demanding instant execution ; and oh, it's fearful, aw—w—ful, hor—r—rid ! ”

“ What do you say ? Do you mean that they are going to—to—to do something awful down there, *now* ? ” Marian cried, springing to her feet and putting a hand on Miss Crabb's shoulder. “ Are they really going to—will they dare do so heinous a thing ? ”

“ Oh, yes, yes ; and oh, Marian, he's crippled, too ; hurt by a railroad accident, and can't help himself ! It's a shame, a burning shame ! I saw the poor man, looking so haggard, with a bandage on his head and his arm in a sling. Oh, I felt so sorry for him, so sorry, sorry for him as they hurried him into the jail to get him away from that awful mob ! ”

Dr. Wilton came in from the library, having overheard a part of what Miss Crabb had said. His glasses were awry on his nose.

“ Father, I'm going down there,” Marian exclaimed in a tone of the utmost firmness. “ This dreadful thing must not be done ; it shall not be done ! ” She hurriedly caught up her little street hat, which she had cast aside when Miss Crabb came in, and without another word darted out of the house and went swiftly through the little gate and down the street. Dr. Wilton and Miss Crabb followed her, greatly excited and calling to her to stop ; but she went on, almost running.

"What can the child mean?" puffed the doctor, as he managed with great difficulty to keep up with Miss Crabb.

"She's excited, exasperated," was the energetic answer. "Oh, those brutes, those men, those—" she could not keep breath enough to finish the sentence.

"Dear me, this is extraordinary, this is, is ridiculous!" exclaimed Dr. Wilton. "Marian, Marian," he called, but she did not hear him. "Marian, my child!"

"She's going right to the jail," remarked Miss Crabb, "I know she is, she's going to save him. That's what she said she was going to do."

"Well, well, well, I do think, this is outrageous!" cried Dr. Wilton, allowing his excitement to get the better of him for the moment. "Marian, Marian, I command you to stop, instantly!"

But she was far beyond reach of his voice now, and he began to feel the effect of his exertion. All this would have been a very extraordinary scene in Bankersville and would have attracted much notice and comment had it not been that the whole town was stirred to the utmost by what was going on elsewhere.

"Marian knows how to take care of herself; never fear for her," said Miss Crabb, in a consolatory tone, as she slackened her pace so as not to leave Dr. Wilton behind. "She'll not run into any danger—there's nobody that would hurt her."

"I can't see what she *does* mean," remarked Dr. Wilton in a more subdued voice ; "it isn't a bit like her, not a bit in the world, to go off like this. She must be greatly wrought up—dreadfully excited."

"Oh, she is, she is!" cried Miss Crabb, growing nervous again as her companion appeared to get calmer, "she's just wild to think they'd do so. I don't wonder at it either ; it's blood-curdling. I don't see what makes men so brutal, and mean, and despicable."

"How could the child ever dream of any thing so wild, so foolish, so improper!" panted Dr. Wilton. "But it's just like her, just like all women, going off at a tangent in this sort of way."

They soon came in sight of a dense crowd of men packed in front of the rather imposing and not at all gloomy looking jail, which was more like a Queen Anne cottage than like a residence for a criminal. A silence, ominous enough considering the occasion, rested upon the streets of Bankersville ; even the black, motionless crowd seemed to have no voice.

Marian's heart failed her when she came as close to the jail as the solid wall of men would permit. She stopped and looked, overcome by a sudden sense of her helplessness, and blushed at the thought of how foolish had been her purpose in coming here. How utterly had vanished from her brain the heroic determination to address all this vast crowd in behalf of law and order ! What could she do ? She shrank

back timidly, as a burly man near her began swearing and cursing most blasphemously. Now and again the crowd swayed clumsily with a sort of wallowing motion. The fact was that a strong body of men, well armed and under control of the sheriff's deputy, was guarding the jail, while the corps of policemen acted as an auxiliary check upon violence or disorder by patrolling the spaces on the flanks of the crowd. The officers were proceeding firmly but very cautiously, fearing that any mistake in the direction of either slackness or over show of authority and force might precipitate a calamity; their experience making them realize that a chance breath could change curiosity and mere aimless excitement in a case like this into the most dreadful phase of human passion and unreason.

Dr. Wilton and Miss Crabb could not find Marian, though they wandered all round the fringe of the crowd, looking eagerly and excitedly about for her. The old man was growing nervous in the extreme; but he was not more pale than the men he met hurrying this way and that, as if bewildered.

"Where *can* she be? where *can* she have gone to? Dear me, she's in the greatest danger; it's dreadful, dreadful!" he exclaimed, in petulant fretfulness, bustling hither and thither, Miss Crabb holding on to his sleeve.

They presently met Milford, who had been trying

vainly to get through the crowd to the jail. He was calm, but pale, looking as if he felt a great weight of responsibility or danger and were ready to meet it.

"Oh, Mr. Milford, Mr. Milford!" cried Miss Crabb, grabbing his arm with a nervous, feminine clutch, "we are *so* glad to see you, *so* glad! Have you seen any thing of Marian—Miss Wilton?"

"Marian! Miss Wilton!" he echoed, glancing quickly from the editor to Dr. Wilton, as if shaking off a cloud from his mind.

"Yes, have you seen her? She came here; we've lost her, we're looking for her—she's dreadfully excited!" exclaimed Miss Crabb. "She surely can't be in the midst of this awful mob of men?"

"It's remarkable, extraordinary—it's—I—I—I don't know what to think!" stammered the old man, looking anxiously at Milford, his long, silky white beard quivering strangely.

"She ran right out of the house just the instant she heard that Mr. Lawson was in danger," Miss Crabb went on without a pause, "saying that she was going to save him, and we couldn't stop her, or catch up with her, or any thing at all, and she's gone—we can't find her. Oh, it's just awful!"

About this time the crowd swayed wildly, and a great bellowing, buzzing murmur ran through it, followed by a multitudinous clamor.

"There he is! There he is!" shouted the many

voices of the surging mass. "Look at him! Look! Look!"

Lawson, accompanied by the jailer, had stepped forth from an upper window of the jail and now stood out on an iron balcony high above the heads of the crowd. His head was uncovered, save that a slender white bandage ran around it, just above the brows, and his right arm rested in a sling. It was generally known that, while trying to escape into Canada from Chicago, he had been hurt in a railway accident in Michigan, and that for a long time he had lain in an obscure farm-house while the detectives were hunting for him everywhere else. He leaned over the iron railing of the balcony and waved his unhurt hand gracefully, just as if he were responding to a serenade. The old, half-boyish smile was on his smooth, heavy face.

"Fellow-citizens!" he cried in a strong, mellow voice: "I had not expected to see so many of you out upon this very interesting occasion. For an impromptu gathering, this certainly does credit to Bankersville and great honor to me. I presume that you have concluded to do me a high favor—a lofty turn—to give a sort of lift, in other words, to my career!"

"Yes, d—n you, we're going to hang you!" shouted a voice, and then followed a great noise and confusion. The sheriff's posse and the police redoubled their efforts.

Every body would have wondered why the jailer had brought Lawson out in sight of the crowd, if every body had not been too much excited to wonder at any thing. The secret of it was that Lawson had the jailer under his thumb.

"You do as I tell you, or I'll tell the whole story of Billy Hempstead's escape from here, do you comprehend?" he had said to that worthy, with an air that made the threat very emphatic. "I want to talk to that mob. There's not a speck of danger. I know the people of Bankersville; take me out, I say! They're a set of cowards down there; they don't know what they're about."

The jailer had bolted all the doors on the inside, leaving the guard in the corridors and on the outside of the building. It took but little persuasion, of the kind resorted to by Lawson, to have its effect.

During the spasm of commotion that shook the crowd at the end of the paragraph of his speech, as above set forth, Lawson leaned a little further over the railing, bowing and smiling and waving his hand. The crowd saw his eyes flash.

"Oh, yes, you'll hang me, of course you will," he presently thundered out. "I always knew you would hang me whenever my luck turned. Any man ought to be hanged who suffers bad luck to overtake him. As the boys say: I ought to have had better luck!"

Somebody laughed, somebody cursed, somebody

yelled out: "Grit to the bone, dern ef he ain't!" There was another great turmoil.

"Yes, I'm grit to the bone, and don't you forget it!" cried Lawson, his voice pealing clear and strong; "and if I had my other arm all right I could thrash the ground with any two of you in a minute!"

"And you bet he could do it, too!" bawled a raucous voice from the midst of the crowd. "I'd hate to tackle 'im!"

"But unfortunately for me, and greatly to your delight," Lawson continued, "I am crippled and weak, and in your power, and of course you'll hang me. I don't ask you not to hang me; but before you begin the fun, permit me the privilege of a few parting words to all my friends, won't you? Oh, of course you will. I have not a great deal to say. I've been unfortunate; but I'm here to say to you that I'm no coward and no thief, and further, if this community will pay me what it owes me, I can settle every claim against me and have a competence left over. Listen to me, you men who purpose to hang me, listen: Tell the city of Bankersville to sell the fine park I donated, and pay the proceeds to those who have lost by me! Ought the city to keep that park and let my creditors suffer? Go to your church-people and tell them that Lawson has given them, altogether, forty thousand dollars that ought to have gone to pay men to whom he owed just debts. Go to your college, that splendid Christian

institution whose spires rise above the woodsy campus yonder, and say to its trustees and faculty: Lawson gave you a large sum of money which he gambled for in Chicago, and which should have been used to keep his honor good; go, give it to his suffering creditors. Ah, you're quiet now; you don't yell and froth now; you're beginning to listen and to think and to be ashamed of yourselves. How many of you begin to recollect that you have some property that you paid for with money won in my bucket-shop? Don't all speak at once! How many of you have I helped to get a start in business? Oh, hang your heads and keep silent, I don't want any of you to expose yourselves, I don't mean to whine for sympathy, but I want you to do right. I want you to credit me with what you owe me and then hang me for what's left over to my debit. Do you really think your churches ought to keep forty thousand dollars of my ill-gotten gains, while men of whom I borrowed money are made beggars? Will Christians consent to it? Can your great institution of learning afford to keep the bonds I gave it and continue to cut off the coupons in the name of a high civilization, while poor widows whom I can not pay become inmates of the county alms-house? Hang me if you please, and as soon as you please, but don't forget where my money went, don't forget that what I have given away in your midst, for your city, your college, your churches and your charities, would pay all I owe

and more. Give me credit, that's all I ask. Now a word more. I've had the Bankersville papers regularly since I've been gone, and I have seen that your lying editors have been trying to heap my sins upon the head of Mr. Milford, my law-partner. I say to you that he is as innocent of any knowledge of my doings, or of any share in my profits or losses in speculation, as any child in this city. What do you want to impugn him for? He hasn't done any thing. I thrashed a few editors hereabouts one day, and I'd like to do it again, and I would if I were strong and free!" He paused a moment, and lifting himself to his fullest stature, raised his voice still higher, sending it to the outer rim of the audience. "Come on up here with your rope and hang me, I'm ready, I'll never flinch; but stop this persecution you have been heaping upon the head of Mr. Milford, for he does not deserve it." He looked slowly around over the crowd, his face lighting up strangely, then he swept his hand swiftly over his forehead and continued: "My friends, you can not afford to disgrace yourselves and this lovely little city with my blood. I know that I can not escape. Personally I would rather be hanged than to be sent to the penitentiary, but it is better for you that you abide by the law and let me take the consequence of my misfortune. I shudder, oh, I shudder at the thought, but you must not become criminals yourselves in order to cheat the state's prison of a victim. Go home now

and leave me to my fate. I guess I'm able to meet it." Nothing could exceed the solemn dignity with which he uttered these closing sentences. His manner, as he bowed and turned sadly and passed into the jail, thrilled the now motionless audience with a strange, deep pity. A sympathy such as is given to a worried and wounded animal, took possession of hearts which, a few moments before, had burned with desperate passion. Little danger of violence existed any longer; in fact the police began at once to disperse the crowd and to order the streets cleared. It was as if the show had ended. Many men were sullen and felt discomfited, some pretended to be wild with anger still, but the larger number began to talk and laugh over what had happened and to feel greatly relieved.

Lawson's harangue had no hearers more attentive and steadfast or more deeply affected than Dr. Wilton, Miss Crabb and Milford. For the time they actually forgot poor Marian.

Miss Crabb whipped out a pencil and note-book, so soon as Lawson had got fairly started, and fell to work making a short-hand report for her paper.

XXI.

MARIAN suddenly found herself almost surrounded by excited men, who, so far from doing her any harm, appeared not to notice her. In her efforts to get away from the crowd she became somewhat bewildered and lost for the time all knowledge of directions; but, finding that no one paid any attention to her, she kept quite calm and was able to take excellent care of herself.

She saw Lawson and heard all that he said. It surprised her not a little to note the effect of his address. To her there was nothing eloquent or touching in the man's words or manner. On the contrary, both struck her as coarse and even soulless. No doubt her woman's intuition or finer sense caught a meaning, not observable by the heedless crowd, from certain indicative gestures, facial movements and intonations; but the collapse of her heroic resolve when she saw the mob, was of itself enough to take away all the romance from the occasion and make her see nothing but the most realistic outline of Lawson's predicament. Indeed, his speech condemned him in her heart, not so much by its crude vulgarity as by what seemed scarcely kept back of it: a reserve of utter heartlessness,

or inability to feel shame or remorse. A woman's sympathy for a man is quite different in its nature from that of a man for a man, under the same stress of circumstances. A mob of women most probably would have hanged Lawson all the more freely after hearing his harangue. The refined feminine heart may be touched by an exhibition of bravery, or moral pluck, or even physical courage, but it recoils from the contemplation of mere beast boldness and callousness to the effects of danger.

Lawson had not shown that sort of courage which Marian admired; but he had touched a chord in the hearts of the men who heard him and saw him, as much by his stolid extreme of semi-humorous indifference, as by the appeal to their sympathies through his physical injuries and his air of "clear grit," as they termed it. When a man has this "clear grit," or is "dead game to the bone," he is sure of that admiration which is peculiarly masculine and which has its root in love of combat.

Marian heard a great many exclamations and fragments of conversation not especially suited to her ears, as she struggled out of the now scattering, and for the most part, good-natured multitude. She quickly got the impression that every body, save her, was directly or indirectly praising Lawson's daring *tour de force*. Somehow, too, as the men surged past her in masses or jostled her singly, she became impressed with the

importance of man's superior physical strength and coarse, tough mental and moral fiber; she saw how difficult it would be for finer and tenderer natures to deal with the rougher aspects of public life. She felt ashamed to think that she had dreamed for a moment of attempting to do by the highest appeal to honor what Lawson by the lowest appeal to mere animal sympathy had so readily done. She knew that she would have failed at best to elicit any thing better than jeers from the crowd. These thoughts did not formulate themselves perfectly, perhaps, but fixed themselves as impressions able to come out more clearly hereafter.

It was like seeing the sun after a long season of dark weather when at length she caught sight of her father's benevolent face and white beard through a rift in the swarm of people. She hurried to him and laid hold on his arm.

"Are you looking for me, father?" she demanded in her sweetest tone. "I rushed away so suddenly that I suppose you thought very strange of it. Shall we go home now?" Before he could answer these rapid questions, she lowered her voice to a murmur and added: "Forgive me, papa, I did not think how it would look." In spite of herself she was feeling as if she had called great public attention to herself—as if she had failed in some effort that had meant a great deal to her.

"Oh, I knew you'd be all right," cried Miss Crabb, putting away her note-book and pencil and rushing upon Marian. "I said so all the time, didn't I, Dr. Wilton? But go home now, dear," she went on, in a half deprecating tone; "you're not as accustomed to the ways of these awful men as I am; and you oughtn't to be here. Take her right back home, Dr. Wilton. I'd walk back with you, but I have to run to the office with my report. What a narrow escape it is from something just awful!"

She hastened away, elbowing along between the men.

"Yes, yes, we'll go, we'll go," said Dr. Wilton, much confused. "This is a shocking thing, Marian, quite shocking, indeed." He did not look at her after the first glance, but hurried her along.

Milford wanted to speak to her, but there was no opportunity. Her eyes met his momentarily, then a stream of men intervened.

"I glory in his everlastin' grit, don't care if he is a rascal," Marian heard some one say. "Then, besides, if every feller that plays sharp in business was hung, we'd have a derned thinly-settled country, I tell you."

"That's what's the matter," was the response. "Chester Lawson done a heap for Bankersville while he had the money to do with. I b'lieve in givin' the devil a fair shake."

"Oh, well, he'll go to the penitentiary, he admits that himself, and that's bad enough. I'm just like him, I'd rather be hung than go there. But I'll be dern if I'd want to be lynched."

"No, it disgraces a feller to be strung up like a dog, and him all crippled up like he is, too."

"You bet."

Dr. Wilton hurried his daughter homeward as fast as he could. He drew a long breath, when at last they were away from the crowd and the murmur of the confusion of voices had withdrawn from their ears, and felt that relief which fresh air gives to one who has been in a stifling and noisome place.

"Now, my daughter," he presently remarked, stroking his long white beard, "I hope you are satisfied; I hope you see that the spheres of women and men differ very widely."

But she had recovered her self-possession quite as fully as he had resumed his authoritative attitude.

"That question does not arise now, father," she said, meeting his look with a disarming smile. "We are in no proper frame of mind for discussing our favorite bone of contention. My first duty is to get your forgiveness for the trouble my foolish act has given you. I regret it—I am very sorry about it—I am ashamed——"

"I am glad you are," Dr. Wilton interrupted with the nearest approach to gruffness she ever had noticed

in his voice and manner. "I am sincerely glad you are, and I shall not expect to have a thing of this sort happen again soon. I——" He hesitated a moment and then proceeded: "I know what you started out to do—you were thinking of getting up before all those wild, furious, cursing men and making a speech. That was a grand idea, I must say!"

This from her gentle and loving old father touched her, cut her, as nothing else could have done. She burst into tears that burned her cheeks.

They were at the gate now, and she ran into the house and up to her room, without making reply. Dr. Wilton sought the quiet of the library in which to recover his lost temper. Never before had he given way to anger with Marian. Her tears had fallen into his heart. He sat down in his arm-chair and leaning back closed his eyes, but he was not left alone long. Marian came running down the stairs and into the room. Her arms were around his neck and her kisses fell fast on his forehead. She carried him by storm before he could think of resistance; there was not much said between them, but they both felt very happy presently. Indeed, Dr. Wilton was so very happy that he did not notice the extreme inconsequence of one remark half whispered by Marian.

"It was honorable and just in him to relieve Mr. Milford of all blame. You heard him say it, papa,

didn't you?" she said, in the way of retrospect and inquiry. "He did *that* much good by his talk, any way."

Dr. Wilton made no answer and Marian appeared not to expect any. She stroked his thin hair lovingly and gazed with half dreaming eyes out through the window over the sheeny distant river and up the further slope of the Wabash valley. She felt that, after all, her foolish escapade had served a good turn, since it had forced her father to hear Lawson's vindication of Milford.

Dr. Wilton, on his part, took quiet delight in thinking that the morning's adventure had greatly modified Marian's views regarding the highest sphere of usefulness for women. He would have suffered a great deal more than this to be sure that she would throw aside her purpose of becoming a lawyer and public speaker. Surely what with Mrs. Goodword's rather repellent performances and this adventure with the mob, she had experienced enough to turn her back. He was not inclined to be fanatical, or bitter, or ultra in his opposition to certain woman's rights theories, but he was thoroughly conservative, all the same, and held tenaciously to his views.

When all is said, however, it is love at last that limits woman's kingdom and sets the boundary to her conquests, for she is not wholly a woman who can refuse to lay all she has at the feet of the little blind

god, no matter to what height of worldly power she may have attained.

Milford called that evening with a new trouble in his mind. Lawson had written him a note from the jail, soon after the crowd dispersed, asking him to become his bondsman, that is to go upon his recognizance, so that he might be at liberty until his trial at court. This might appear very easy at first view, but Milford saw that for him to aid Lawson in any way would certainly confirm the public rumor that he was a sharer in his partner's crimes. He discussed the proposition with Marian, setting before her, in every possible light, the obligations he was under to Lawson and the consequences that might flow from any act of friendship or assistance under the circumstances. Marian was thus reminded of her own probable debt to Lawson, such as it was. She frankly told Milford the whole story of how Hempstead had been freed from jail through Lawson's management, as she verily believed.

"He is a bad man," she said, reflectively, "but he has, in a strange way, done a great deal for us.

"One hates to acknowledge it," she went on, after a thoughtful pause, "and it doesn't seem right for one to have to, but we owe him a great deal, a very large debt."

Milford sighed, pulling his mustache abstractedly.

"I wish he would let himself out of jail as he let

Hempstead out," he exclaimed, "that would end the whole distressing trouble."

"Is it quite right to wish that?" Marian asked, unwilling that Milford should appear to fall back one inch from the advanced position he had hitherto occupied. She may have feared that he was losing ground with himself on account of his love for her.

"I hardly know what is right. I have lost my standard," he said, trying to turn aside the force of her question by a feint of levity.

"But you might help him in some way to get his bail and yet not be known—" she began.

"Marian," he interrupted, "you would not have me shirk a responsibility?"

"No," she rejoined, coloring a little, "you could not do that; but you can not abandon him altogether."

"No."

A silence fell between them, as if the subject had been suddenly exhausted.

"I owe my start in business to him," Milford presently exclaimed with a certain strain of impatience in his voice. "He saved me when I was at the point of despair. I can not refuse to go his bail now."

"But it will subject you to most distressing suspicions and surmises."

"My conscience will be clear."

She rose and stood before him.

"Go, and do whatever is right and I, at least, will

stand by you to the end," she said, with a little tremor in her voice.

"And God will be with us both!" he cried, springing up and taking her in his arms. "How noble and dear you are!"

Dr. Wilton lifted aside a little portiere, and was about to enter the room, but he vanished instantly and noiselessly; it was a scene for which he was not quite ready, though he felt that he would have to submit to what it prophesied.

Later on in the evening Milford told Marian that he had written the publishers, and had agreed to spend the winter in the South, making them a story of southern life.

"I shall have to start at the end of six weeks," he said, "and I want you to go with me; so I hope you'll arrange the preliminaries."

"I'm not in such a hurry," she lightly responded. "I'll wait and see if you are going to continue successful. Literature is a very unruly hobby, so Miss Crabb says."

"But I shall fail if you are not with me," he said, and with such earnestness that she became serious. "Marian, I can not, I will not go without you."

"Am I so precious as all that?" she murmured. "Oh, if I thought it, my happiness would be too great!"

"But you do know it," he whispered, "and you are just as happy as you can be, and so am I."

And then they forgot all the past, all the future, wrapped in the mist of love.

XXII.

THE detectives pocketed the various rewards offered for the capture of Lawson and went their ways, leaving Bankersville in a state of collapse after the great excitement it had experienced.

Milford found the matter of arranging a bail-bond for Lawson a very difficult one indeed on account of the multitude of indictments and the heavy penal sums required. There were delays and hindrances almost innumerable.

Lawson did not wait very long, however, for one fine morning it was announced that he had "vacated his apartments in the jail and gone to parts unknown." The reader, being fully advised of Lawson's power over the jailer, can easily imagine how the escape was accomplished. Of course, Bankersville flared up again, and offered more rewards, but it was quickly found out that the fugitive had got into Canada.

On the night of Lawson's escape the *Scar* editor saw, lingering in the streets, the old man about whose peculiar appearance and disappearance he had speculated so vainly. This mysterious individual was more respectably clad than formerly and bore himself better,

but he was just as much as ever an enigma to the *Scar* editor. What connection he may have had with Lawson's escape could only be conjectured, but it was very authoritatively settled that he accompanied him to Canada, where the twain were often seen together apparently enjoying themselves most liberally.

There can be no doubt that the people of Bankersville felt a relief of no uncertain sort when at last, with a long breath, as it were, they gave up all hope of ever seeing punishment for any save petty crimes administered by the courts.

"Oh, we worry these criminals a right smart, an' yank 'em around an' skeer 'em a good deal, but it 'pears like 'at in the eend they all come clear," said Downs, with a resignation in his voice that appeared to affect Mrs. O'Slaughtery very deeply. "Now, there's that Lawson jest a-fattenin' on my money up there in Canada, an' the law can't tech 'im."

"Yis, the vagabond, an' us jest a-waitin' an'——" She caught herself with a little cough and a pretty blush—"awaiting for the law to do its work, an' it fails every toime."

"Yes, precisely, an' only to think of the young ladies, the nobby, high-toned girls of the place, a carryin' flowers an' books to the dern whelp an' pettin' 'im like a baby there in the jail! They'd better been a-carryin' potatoes an' flour to the poor widders he robbed."

A great many people expressed themselves to about the same effect in reviewing the status of Bankersville affairs. But in the West there is no such thing as despondency over ill-luck. Men pull themselves together and begin afresh after each financial cataclysm with smiling faces and hopeful eyes, plucky to the death. This elasticity of spirit has been attributed philosophically to a great many agencies, prominent among which is malaria.

"You keep a man's blood a-boilin' with an exhilaratin' poison, an' he'll everlastinly git up an' go," said a Wabash doctor; "an' malaria is absolutely intoxicatin' if you don't git too much of it into you. Of course, it's like any other intoxicant, if you git too much it downs you an' rubs you out. Yes, sir, malaria is the secret of Western restlessness and rush and enterprise. Whenever all this country gits ditched out dry you'll see folks begin to git satisfied an' quiet an' all this wild worry'll be over. It's a fact, no doubt about it. Why, sir, it's nothin' but malaria that's made Chicago. You jest eliminate malaria from the atmosphere of Illinois and Indiana, an' that board of trade up there in Chicago 'll bust inside of a week, 'cause a man's mind's got to be poisoned before he'll have the nerve to buck against that big a tiger. Notice it when you will, an' you'll see that a season of big speculation in Chicago is a season of epidemic malarial diseases."

Mrs. O'Slaughtery was a woman who calculated

financial probabilities and possibilities very closely and cleverly for one of her limited opportunities, but she often found it helpful to call upon Milford for counsel. At such times she always invited him into her parlor and came to the question without delay or circumlocution. What proved to be the last interview of this kind took place a week or two after Lawson's escape from jail.

Mrs. O'Slaughtery appeared to be considerably excited, and it troubled her no little to get to the point of her thoughts. She tried to be very grave and dignified and was thoroughly on guard against the Irish brogue.

"It's not that I care for the money, you know," she began, "but thin you know I can't charge him any board while we're ingaged, and so it's all a-comin' off me all the toime, don't ye see. To be sure it's all in the family loike, as you moight say," she paused and rolled her handkerchief into a ball in her lap, "but oi've faygured on it an' it seems bad economy to my moind. What do you say, Misther Milford?"

"It is very plain," said Milford, "that you ought to marry at the earliest day practicable."

"That's me moind, that's me moind," she exclaimed, vigorously rolling the ball. "Not that I care how long I wait, at all, but thin ayconomy, Misther Milford, ayconomy demands a change in affairs altogither, for I can't afford the ixpensive luxury of kaypin' 'im

a-boardin' on me an' git no—that is not have—I should say—” she got hopelessly entangled and at the same time blushed scarlet.

“Oh, you're quite right, Mrs. O'Slaughtery,” Milford kindly interposed. “You can't afford so barren an investment as that, and you must tell him so.”

“Dear me! I can't think of it at all! The idea is revoltin' to my womanhood altogether,” she cried.

“Well, I'll tell him,” said Milford promptly; “you leave him to me, will you?”

“I always have trusted you, Mистер Milford, and you've always been so koind,” she sighed. “But it doesn't look jist roight for me to be all the toime a-worryin' you about me own affairs intoirely.”

“That's all right,” said Milford cordially, as he rose to go. “Downs will not be refractory; he'll thank me for the suggestion. You may as well get ready for the happy event.”

She gave her pretty head a saucy toss, but made no reply, save by darting a bright smile at Milford as he went out.

It was near this time that the editor of the *Scar* found what he called a “lead” in connection with Lawson's past life. A series of very sensational editorials followed, giving what purported to be a history of the “cheekiest fraud of the age,” a history quite authentic, no doubt, in all its main features. Lawson's true name turned out to be McGlaughson, and his former

home Kansas, where his father had served a long term in the state's prison for fraudulent land transactions and forgery.

"The whole family seems to have been tricky, to say the least," ran a *Scar* paragraph; "for two of the brothers of our hero were hanged in Texas and Indian Territory for appropriating personal property, and the mother of the family was suspected of secreting stolen goods. Our man was the best of the lot, in many respects. He was educated by an uncle of his mother, a rich California man, who sent him to Europe to get culture; but this benefactor died suddenly, without a will, leaving the young adventurer high and dry. Then he came to Bankersville, under the name of Lawson, and began his streak of luck."

Every body could see, now that the line of vision was turned backward, how Lawson's short, disastrous career had been almost wholly controlled by mere luck. He had possessed a certain sort of pluck and nerve and, no doubt, he had not that dread of failure which haunts minds of a higher and purer order. Conscience with him was a mere whim, absent or present according to circumstances; moreover, his selfishness overshadowed every other element of his character. He was a bird of prey, always hungry, always watching, always pouncing, attempting to devour whatever came in his way, utterly regardless of the consequences. He told the truth when he said that not a drop of

honest blood ran in his veins. He had come of a long line of men who had lived by their wits, lived by the chances of the times, who had preyed upon mankind in seasons of need and misfortune. With him to trust to luck was hereditary, and to expect fortune to favor him was a traditional trait.

• He was, in some degree, a type, peculiarly American, of the character which has given to the West much of its spasmodic progress as well as most of its picturesque villainy, and his career may be found recorded in almost exact duplicate, so far as essentials go, in a large number of Western towns, the career of a financial adventurer known as the child of luck. It has never been known whether he had forwarded to Canada a sum of money before his collapse came, but people generally believed that he had. At all events, he is reported to be living with his father in a comfortable way, and to be growing fat and lazy doing nothing. No effort has ever been made to fetch him back to Bankersville for trial, and he probably will pass the rest of his life unmolested in the midst of a small colony of men of his ilk who have fled from angry creditors and crazed partners to a safe retreat, where they can enjoy their ill-gotten fortunes under the kind shadow of a very accommodating phase of the extradition laws.

Bankersville has almost forgotten Lawson and his luck. It is a thriving city, full as ever of banks and

speculators, and it has two bucket-shops instead of one, to say nothing of its faro "dealers," its "bunko steerers," and its "poker cappers," all doing a fair share of business. The college is still open to young gentleman only, and Dr. Wilton has been dubbed Cæsar by the seniors for the reason (as they say) that he has conquered "immense Gaul (gall)" in finally putting down the advocates of co-education.

If you should ever go to Bankersville it would delight you to stop at the Downs' House, on the corner near the post-office. The place has a faint Irish flavor, so to say, but the fare is good and the charges are moderate. The proprietor is a broad-faced, sanguine, genial soul, who is over-fond of telling stories of when he was "nothing but a chunk of an auctioneer."

Milford has become a confirmed professional *litterateur*, and Marian helps him in his work a great deal, notwithstanding that she often declares that all literary men, with the occasional exception which proves the rule, are weak little fellows personally, and exert an influence essentially inferior to that of the orators. They have been spending their winters in St. Augustine, Florida, and their summers in Bankersville, living a very quiet, happy life, troubled very little with the complications of contemporary social and political struggles, and slowly forgetting that they were ever a part of that restless young America whose spirit is

conquest, progress, acquisition, at all hazards and by any means. They have made it a pleasure to assist Miss Crabb over the rough places of the fascinating road which, with constant hope, the literary hack is doomed to travel, without ever getting more than a tantalizing waft from the Eden of success.

They have once or twice planned to spend a summer in Canada, but as often have abandoned the thought when it occurred to them that they possibly might chance to meet Lawson. They do not mention his name when it can be avoided, for they have never got rid of a strange feeling of doubt and gloom in connection with his memory, and it is the only skeleton in their closet: this knowledge that they owe him a debt they never can pay.

Milford's "record" does not trouble him much now. Once in a while, when news items are scarce and the *Scar* editor is suffering from an unusually stubborn attack of malaria, there appears in his journal a grave warning to the people against harboring ex-rebels and tolerating certain young men who "appear to be trying to lower Chester Lawson's record."

Not long ago, two rather well-dressed but disreputable looking persons, an old, wrinkled man and a corpulent, middle-aged fellow, sat at a table in a low beer-room in Toronto.

"Well, suppose Congress do ratify the proposed treaty, the result can not affect us—a treaty can't be

retroactive," said the younger, as he slowly glanced over the columns of a morning paper. "What do we care how soon they ratify it?"

The old man looked wistfully into the bloated face of his companion, but made no answer. Presently the stolid eyes of the latter fixed themselves on a paragraph—a mere trivial "literary note," and a grayish light ran over his cheeks as he read :

"It is said that the beautiful wife of Louis Milford assists him in writing his novels."

Slowly Chester Lawson's head sank upon the table, and for a long while he mused in silence.

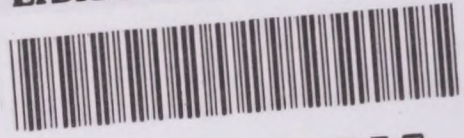
What were his thoughts? Was he realizing that ill-gotten wealth is the greatest menace a free government has to confront? Was he pondering over the mistakes of his past life? Or was he dreaming the old, old dream?

THE END.

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